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A SALUTE TO HEROES

American Legion National Commander Marty Conatser, flanked by Texas Gov. Rick Perry and American Legion Auxiliary National President Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, pays tribute to those who made the supreme sacrifice during the invasion of Normandy. Thousands of veterans and their families traveled to the northwest coast of France during the first week of June to recognize the 64th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

Conatser and Pulvermacher-Ryan laid wreaths at the Normandy American Cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach and later at the town square of Ste. Mere-Eglise, where paratroopers landed in the early-morning darkness of June 6, 1944, breaching Germany's World War II occupation of France and beginning the end of Hitler's reign in Europe.

The commander participated in numerous D-Day anniversary ceremonies while in Normandy and met with veterans who survived one of the most significant events in U.S. and world history. Jeff Stoffer

Cover illustraton by Matt Everett

The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.7 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 15,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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*Juliette Cubanski, Molly Voris, Michelle Kitchman, Tricia Neuman, Lisa Potetz, & The Kaiser Family Foundation, *Medicare Chartbook*, Third Edition, Summer 2005. <http://www.kff.org/medicare/7284.cfm>, (December 6, 2006), p. 32. This is a Solicitation of Insurance.

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EDITOR Jeff Stoffer
MANAGING EDITOR Philip M. Callaghan
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/ OPERATIONS Brandy Ballenger
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Joyce Cole
SENIOR EDITOR Steve Brooks
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Matt Grills
ASSISTANT EDITOR James V. Carroll
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR Alan W. Dowd

ART DIRECTOR Holly K. Soria
DESIGNER Matt Everett

PRODUCTION MANAGER Tony Heath

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'Damned If We Don't'



Between my involvement in emergency preparedness and role as a trainer in WMD operations and counterterrorism, I am proud to see that our organization has the insight to publish an article on an issue of such importance. Our infrastructure is at risk in more ways than the normal citizen could possibly believe, and few organizations have stepped up to the plate to both recognize the problems and do something about them.

I would like to see more articles that deal with what American Legion members and posts can do to become more aware of the threats that face us as a nation, and to help prepare and respond to these threats.

Kudos to Ken Olsen for the fine article and wake-up call.

– Willard F. Gaefcke Jr., Lakewood, Calif.

Ken Olsen's article is an eye-opener. Not living downstream from any dams, I hadn't given them much consideration. However, I now find myself profoundly disturbed – not only by the state of the nation's dams, but even more so by FEMA's response to the situation.

To throw up one's hands and offer nothing more than a way to minimize loss – not if, but when the dam fails – bespeaks a major failure of government. In essence, the government would teach those downstream how to swim.

– John W. Glowacki, Warren, Mich.

Respect for the flag

Thanks for the article "Respect for the Red, White and Blue" (July). It was brief and most informative. I always wondered why military flag patches worn by our troops appear backwards. They're moving toward battle.

Also, kudos to Legionnaires Charles Bennett and Travis Hill, pictured on the contents page, for protecting our flag from being trampled at the University of Maine-Farmington.

– Jerry Rubin, Randolph, N.J.

As a veteran and patriotic American, I appreciated the article "Respect for the Red, White and Blue." It is common to see improper displays of the flag, but I have long thought that wearing flag apparel was also improper and misguided. Your item on flag apparel corrected that misconception, for which I am grateful.

– Dr. Harold Magoun Jr., Greenwood Village, Colo.

'Sacrifices of the Signers'

Mike Coppock's article "Sacrifices of the Signers" (July, Rapid Fire) is incorrect in saying that five signers were captured by the British and died after being tortured.

None died in captivity, and none died from torture. The five known to be captured were Richard Stockton, Edward Rutledge, Arthur Middleton, George Walton and Thomas Heyward Jr. They all were released, and most had prominent roles in founding the United States. Stockton apparently suffered the most from his imprisonment but continued to live in poor health after his release.

– Milton James, Easton, Md.

Medal of Honor heroes

I am pleased to read articles about Medal of Honor heroes in *The American Legion Magazine* ("Rescue in Afghanistan," May). The fact that most media ignore them leads me to believe that they're anti-military.

– Ed Munton, Amargosa Valley, Nev.

'Behind the Stripes'

I was appalled by your article "Behind the Stripes" (July). Ralph Peters introduces it by stating, from several angles, that there is a difference in the quality and relevancy of information, its truth and its level of detail based on whether the speaker is non-commissioned or commissioned. He purports to have been both enlisted and officer but clearly regrets making the transition; on that basis alone, Peters completely neglects to interview an officer to validate his claim.

As a Mustang myself (Navy corpsman and retired Navy commander) who successfully made that transition, I can say I still have the same DNA as a retiree: officer and petty officer. I do agree that a commission affords better access to the larger perspective. However, there is no fundamental change in the person when the rank insignia moves from shoulder to collar. Regardless of the clothing you wear on the job, your duty is to honorably perform to the utmost of your ability. The rest of the article was fine; the soldiers did all the talking.

– Dennis Snyder, Brookfield, Wis.

NCOs Todd Hood, Michael W. Clauss and Travis Wewers are the type of noncommissioned officers with whom I would want my grandchildren to serve. Ralph Peters is to be congratulated for the fine article. The NCOs he interviewed are military role models who are courageous, totally dedicated and fully aware of the dangers they face every day. What great soldiers – the best in the world.

– Jack Carty, Lexington, Ky.

'Patriot Slave'

I very much enjoyed the article about Tina C. Jones' Revolutionary War ancestor, Oscar Marion (July). She deserves credit for reminding us how much we owe those who have served and sacrificed to keep us free.

This noble burden continues to be borne by U.S. servicemembers, regardless of race or gender. Generals – not even the "Swamp Fox" – can do it all by themselves.

– Bruce Rider, Grapevine, Texas

As a Civil War re-enactor and amateur historian, I'd like to say thanks for this article. African-American troops do not receive enough recognition today.

– Fritz Jacobs, Winchester, Ky.

'A Place to Call Home'

The article "A Place to Call Home" (July) brings to mind my and my brother's stay at the American Legion Childen's Billet in Michigan. It's a shame it's closed now. It's good to know that two such homes are still operating.

– Richard J . Straughen, Eastpointe, Mich.

'Our Other Immigration Problem'

Alan W. Dowd's article (June) is very good. However, he could have added a couple other items for consideration. On the supply side, it's established that those illegally in the country are breaking the law by their presence. How many other U.S. laws are they breaking?

On the demand side, do big business and government help create the problem by advocating a bilingual country?

– Frederick Ebner, Brick, N.J.

'The Safety Net'

As a patriotic American and a veteran, I was appalled by this article (June). A military draft would be devastating to our country. The Selective Service is unconstitutional. I was shocked to see the Legion, one of the strongest voices for the military and veterans, praise this measure. You should be working to help keep our soldiers and fellow Americans out of war, not helping push the government into more unnecessary conflicts.

– Nathan Bobay, Indianapolis

'A Salute to Military Fathers'

The cover of the June issue depicting a salute to a military father brought back fond memories of Norman Rockwell's many caricatures. They appeared on the cover of the old *Collier's* magazine in the 1930s and 1940s and never failed to trigger a variety of positive emotional feelings. Perhaps Derek Mueller will become the Norman Rockwell of the 20th century.

– Daniel Kelly, Ardsley, N.Y.

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Climate Security Act of 2008



SUPPORT

Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Maine

■ Klobuchar serves on the Senate Environment, Commerce and Agriculture committees.

Last December, the U.S. Air Force unveiled 140 acres of solar energy panels at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. On the same day, a C-17 transport plane made the Air Force's first cross-country flight using a blend of synthetic fuel.

These are just two of the many major investments in innovative energy technology being made by the branches of the U.S. military, the largest energy consumer in the country.

Our military leaders recognize that climate change, energy and national security are interrelated challenges. They know that man-made climate change is a real problem. They also know it requires real solutions, including changes in how we produce and consume our energy.

The good news is that Congress is no longer debating whether global climate change is real. Unfortunately, the Climate Security Act, introduced and co-authored last October by Sens. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., and John Warner, R-Va., was blocked this year by a Senate rule requiring 60 votes to proceed.

The Lieberman-Warner legislation proposes that the fairest, most effective way to combat climate change is to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions with market incentives. These emissions have a real cost to our environment, so they should also have a price. The market can then work its magic, with incentives for industries to reduce their emissions.

The United States has always been a country that sees opportunity where others see adversity. Today, the challenge of climate change offers us an opportunity to create a more secure energy future for the next generation. Our military is already taking the lead. Now it's time for all of America to seize the moment.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

The Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act seeks reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through market incentives. Critics say the bill will result in higher energy costs and the loss of millions of U.S. jobs.



OPPOSE

Sen. Kit Bond, R-Mo.

■ Bond is vice chairman of the Senate Select Intelligence Committee.

We can and must cut carbon emissions. Unfortunately, carbon-cap plans such as the recent Lieberman-Warner bill before Congress will hurt families without lowering global temperatures.

We all depend on gas for our cars, heat and air conditioning for our homes, and power for lights and appliances. Under carbon-cap plans, Americans will face staggering cost increases for these everyday necessities.

Lieberman-Warner sponsors admitted their plan would cost over $6.7 trillion. While they may intend for energy companies will pay these costs, we know they would just pass these costs on to the American people in the form of greater pain at the pump, higher power bills and lost jobs.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimated that the bill would raise the price of gasoline $1.40 per gallon, raise power bills 44 percent by 2030, and force upon families $4,377 on average in higher energy prices.

I also opposed the Climate Security Act for the harm it would cause blue-collar manufacturing workers in energy-dependent sectors. Workers supporting middle-class families by making steel, aluminum, plastics, chemicals, fertilizer, paper and more would see their jobs go overseas to countries in Asia and the Middle East that have cheaper energy costs. One manufacturing group estimated total job loss at 3 million to 4 million nationwide.

All of this pain would be for nothing, since the Environmental Protection Agency estimated that passing Lieberman-Warner would have almost no effect on world temperatures if China and India – who have already rejected the idea – did not adopt similar plans.

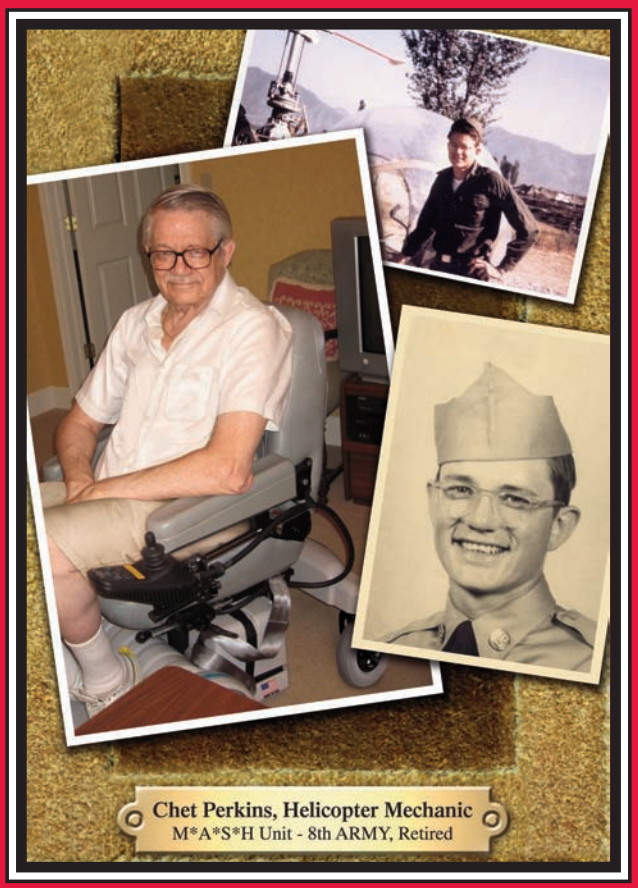
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THE FOUR PILLARS

THE VALUE OF AMERICAN LEGION MEMBERSHIP IS BUILT AROUND FOUR MAJOR MISSIONS.

In southern California, a Vietnam War veteran who knows firsthand the cruel realities of homelessness now leads one of the nation's most dynamic efforts to help severely wounded troops find their way home from war, sometimes with missing limbs, mental illness or broken families.

In a courtroom at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a Chinese-American veteran from New York City closely monitors legal proceedings to assure that detainees from the war on terror are given fair opportunities to plead their cases.

In a college corridor in Maine, a patriotic veteran stands with his arms folded and stops students from walking across a U.S. Flag laid out on the floor. He is threatened with arrest before the so-called "art" project is removed.

A group of veterans in Alabama takes an annual motorcycle ride to a summer camp for children with cancer. Terminally ill youngsters thrill to the rumble of the big bikes. They try on helmets. They twist the throttles. The veterans drop off a check for $10,000 before heading out.

These are some extraordinary veterans.

They are also members of The American Legion.

And their stories can be multiplied thousands of times over, across the nation and around the world. They abide by the preamble of a constitution nearly 90 years ago, words that are held aloft on four main pillars of service and advocacy:

- Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
- National Security
- Americanism
- Children & Youth



National Commander
Marty Conatser

Last spring, I asked our National Headquarters staff to prepare a "white-paper" report to provide information for the leading presidential candidates this year. Its intent was to spell out The American Legion's positions on VA health care, veterans benefits claims, the GI Bill, jobs and business opportunities, adjustment assistance for wounded warriors returning home, and other important issues taken up by our Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission. These are, indeed, major aspects of what we do.

But that's not all we do. And so, the report needed to be expanded.

The new commander in chief also needs to understand The American Legion's ongoing commitment to success in the global war on terrorism – that we support the troops *and* their mission.

The candidates need to know that The American Legion opposes illegal immigration and amnesty for illegal aliens, but fully supports opportunities for *legal* immigration. The candidates need to know that a full accounting of our POW/MIAs is a sacred priority, as is a decent quality of life for military personnel and their families. The candidates need to know that the strength of American Legion conviction on issues we include within the pillar known as National Security.

No candidate should ever question our patriotism. Upon the pillar of Americanism, this organization promotes obedience to law and order, and respect for the U.S. Flag. The American Legion builds enthusiasm for public service among

young people through such programs as Boys Nation and the National Oratorical Contest. We will never abandon Boy Scouts of America as it fights disingenuous lawsuits filed by profit-minded legal organizations. We believe God deserves a place in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America, and in the town square, too.

The roots of the fourth pillar – Children & Youth – reach back to the combat-weary doughboys who founded The American Legion. They survived trench warfare, machine-gun firefights, mid-air dogfights and mustard gas. When they called their first caucus at Paris in 1919, they focused not on themselves but on the children and youth of America. They knew that children were made orphans by the war, and that many had little chance to succeed without help. The slogan they coined resonates today: "A Square Deal for Every Child." Millions of dollars have since been raised and innumerable hours have been volunteered by Legionnaires, in order to help children who are sick or in need, or simply looking for opportunities to achieve their goals. The American Legion has advocated on their behalf, fighting against such social ills as child pornography, teen suicide, drug abuse and violence at home.

The American Legion, with 2.7 million members and more than 14,000 posts, has flourished since 1919 because of these pillars, these values. The pillars are us, and we are them. As you read the following pages, take pride. You are among millions of extraordinary veterans who call themselves Legionnaires, past, present and future. And it is our duty to keep strengthening the pillars.



Preamble
to The American Legion Constitution

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY, WE ASSOCIATE OURSELVES TOGETHER FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

to maintain law and order;

to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism;

to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars;

to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation;

to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

to make right the master of might;

to promote peace and good will on earth;

to safeguard and transmit to Posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;

to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

PILLAR I: VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION



Sean Crosier

The American Legion has for nearly 90 years acted as the nation's leading advocate for proper health care, economic opportunity and legal benefits for U.S. military veterans. The Legion was instrumental in the creation of the Veterans Administration in 1930 and an ardent supporter of its elevation to cabinet status when it became the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1989. The relationship between VA and The American Legion continues to evolve today.

As it has for decades, The American Legion continues to aggressively lobby for adequate funding of VA health care, timely access to facilities, fair rulings on benefit claims and economic opportunities for those who have come home changed by their military experience. A nationwide network of American Legion department service officers works diligently to assist veterans as they pursue benefits and care they earned and deserve. At the local, state and national levels, thousands of Legionnaires provide countless hours to help veterans understand their benefits. The American Legion provides professional representation in claims appeals, discharge disputes and transition assistance from active-duty to civilian status throughout the country.

Today, as the number of discharged veterans from the global war on terrorism has surpassed 500,000, the Legion's federally chartered role to support them could not be more profound. The Legion strongly believes that a veteran is a veteran, no matter the war era, nature or location of service. In that light, The American Legion is the only organization that works on behalf of all 24.5 million U.S. veterans, and all who will follow.

The American Legion stands on the front line of change in the pillar of service known as "Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation."

It is a complex and vital part of the organization's mission, particularly now, as a new generation of wartime veterans enters the civilian and VA world.

Following are Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation issues of high priority to The American Legion:

Access to VA Health Care. VA has undergone a well-documented evolution in the past 25 years, dramatically increasing quality of care beyond that of the private or public sectors. An equally well-documented problem, however, is access to that high-quality care. Access to VA care is restricted in many ways, including:

- **Denial of VA health care to veterans of certain demographic characteristics.** The continued budget-driven suspension of Priority Group 8 veterans from new enrollment in the VA health-care system defies the spirit and intention of the Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996 and denies access to the population of veterans most likely to contribute to the cost of their own care. Among those Priority Group 8

veterans are many with service-connected disabilities who are denied enrollment.

- **New VA facilities await construction in many areas of veteran population growth.** The Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) decision of 2004 identified urgent needs across the country for new VA hospitals and clinics in areas of fast veteran population growth. Four years later, only a fraction of those construction projects are funded and actually under way.
- **Long waiting times for appointments drive away veterans in overburdened VA markets.** Waiting times for VA doctor appointments can take months. At one point in recent years, more than 300,000 veterans were waiting 30 days or more for primary-care appointments. The waiting time to see a VA specialist is typically even more frustrating, often taking months.
- **Failure to adjudicate VA benefits claims and appeals in a timely manner denies access to veterans in need.** VA's backlog of more than 400,000 undecided claims, along with thousands of disputed decisions that have not been reconciled, denies care by delaying it.
- **VA health-care facilities must be adequately staffed with health-care providers who receive competitive compensation.** In too many markets across the country, doctor, nurse and technician shortages lead VA to seek more expensive and less efficient services from outside providers. Inadequate staffing prevents VA from keeping timely appointment schedules and drives veteran patients away in many markets.
- **Restricted access unnecessarily sends veterans to private contractors for health care formerly available to them in VA facilities.** Particularly for long-term care and mental-health services, VA increasingly relies on outside contractors who not understand the unique needs of veterans who consistently suffer from such conditions as combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, Agent Orange exposure and other service-connected problems.
- **Veterans in rural areas are often denied access by the sheer distance between their homes and the VA medical centers equipped to serve them.** Many plans have been piloted to enhance care for rural veterans, but significant improvement – aside from a recent mileage-reimbursement increase from 11 cents to 28 cents per mile – has yet to be realized. Without greater VA clinical presence in many areas of the country, access is denied to these veterans.


Sean Crosier

'A System Worth Saving'

American Legion field staff research and visit VA medical facilities throughout the nation each year and produce a comprehensive assessment. The "System Worth Saving" report provides in-depth analyses of VA health-care performance in all 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

The project, launched in 2002 and 2003, continues under the guidance of the Legion's System Worth Saving Task Force and the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division.

A Better Funding Formula for VA Health Care. The discretionary process of funding the Veterans Health Administration is flawed because it fails to match actual dollars with actual demand. This breakdown has led to numerous emergency funding actions by Congress and has left VA without any new budget at all to begin a new fiscal year for over a decade. VA must be funded on the basis of real cost, without burdening veterans on fixed incomes by doubling deductibles and installing new enrollment fees that do not guarantee timely access to care. VA administrators must be given workable budgets to begin their fiscal year; the practice of running VA health-care facilities on questionable cost estimates in multiple continuing resolutions must cease. Enrollment fees are paid through honorable military service, not out of veterans' pockets, as a hedge against a miscalculated discretionary budget. New patient enrollment fees and dramatic co-payment increases are not viable options to balance VA's medical-care budget.

The American Legion supports:

- A mandatory funding formula for VA health care, based on dollars per patient, indexed annually for inflation.
- The authorization of VA to collect Medicare reimbursements for services provided to enrolled, Medicare-qualified, non-service-connected veterans, similar to the authorization granted to other Indian Health Services and TRICARE for Life.
- The reinstatement of Priority Group 8 veterans and improved performance standards in collections from their insurance companies.
- Protection from a doubling of prescription co-payments and/or the introduction of annual VA health-care enrollment fees.
- A mandate to give VA health-care facility administrators the budgets they need at the beginning of each fiscal year.


James V. Carroll

THE LEGION'S NETWORK OF SERVICE OFFICERS

The American Legion maintains a network of approximately 1,700 professional, accredited representatives – known also as service officers or department service officers – who are officially recognized by VA to provide representation and assistance to veterans and their dependents. The service is provided free of charge, regardless of membership.

The American Legion National Headquarters also maintains fully staffed offices of professional appeals representatives at VA's Board of Veterans Appeals and Appeals Management Center. National appeals representatives at the BVA and AMC provide direct representation to veterans and survivors whose claims are denied at the regional office level and then appealed.

The American Legion also works with the National Veterans Legal Services Program, a nonprofit veterans law firm and consultant to The American Legion and the Veterans Consortium, to ensure that Legion-represented claims denied by the BVA have access to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Veterans With Special Needs. The American Legion strongly supports efforts to improve services, advance research and deliver compassionate treatment to veterans with special needs, such as:

- Those who have become homeless since discharge.
- Those who suffer from traumatic brain injuries and/or mental illness.
- Those who have suffered multiple combat injuries, defined as "polytrauma."
- Those who battle with conditions related to Agent Orange exposure, Gulf War illness, radiation exposure due to atomic testing, mustard-gas exposure and other medical problems linked, or presumably linked, to military service.

The Legion specifically urges VA and Congress to fund and adequately staff a greater number of Vet Centers around the country, which provide mental health and occupational outreach to thousands of veterans who otherwise look to the VA medical system for help, or who end up on the street.

The Legion also supports recommendations from the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors to enhance focus on traumatic brain injury and PTSD among veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The Legion also supports new VA polytrauma centers across the country to manage unique problems faced by OIF and OEF combat veterans.

Career Opportunities for Veterans. Job and education opportunities are pushed aside to make time for military service. Career advancement and college educations are often delayed. For some veterans returning to civilian life with physical disabilities or personal problems, such a transition can be daunting. The Legion's Economic Division, a major part of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation pillar, works specifically in that area.

A GI Bill for a New Century. The American Legion worked closely with Congress to help pass a new GI Bill last summer. However, many veterans do not fully understand the education benefit and how it can help them. The Legion is now working on an outreach effort to provide information.

Employment and Business. The American Legion actively participates in numerous acts of outreach for veterans seeking employment or business opportunities after military service. The Legion aggressively lobbies for veterans preference laws and compliance with laws designed to provide incentives for disabled-veteran entrepreneurship. Similarly, the Legion's Economic Division assists in job and career fairs throughout the country and works to protect the careers and benefits of reservists and National Guardsmen during military deployments.

Heroes to Hometowns. The American Legion's Heroes to Hometowns program helps severely injured U.S. servicemembers successfully transition back into their communities and civilian lives. Technically a national program, Heroes to Hometowns, or H2H, cannot work without the grassroots efforts of American Legion posts.

The American Legion works closely with DoD and VA to identify veterans in need and provide readjustment help and mentoring at the local level.

Final Respects. The American Legion works closely with the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), Arlington National Cemetery, and other federal and state governments and entities to ensure a proper burial for all veterans as well as honorable burial services for the veteran, the family of the veteran, and other loved ones. The Legion also serves as a major coordinator of the Missing in America Project, which ensures that cremated remains of veterans, long forgotten in funeral homes, hospitals and other establishments, are respectfully laid to rest. The American Legion provides a large portion of the Missing in America Project's volunteers.



Steve Brooks

Careers for Veterans

The American Legion's Economic Division and the Legion's Veterans Small Business Task Force actively pursue new career opportunities for veterans through job fairs and business workshops across the country. The American Legion has formal partnerships with RecruitMilitary, LLC, Avue Technologies and Military.com, a subsidiary of Monster.com, to participate in a robust schedule of career fairs throughout the year.

The Legion also has aggressively lobbied for improved compliance of laws that require no less than 3 percent of federal contracts be awarded to businesses owned by service-disabled veterans, along with other opportunities for veteran entrepreneurs.

www.vetjobs.us

www.military.com

www.recruitmilitary.com

American Legion Economic Division
(202) 861-2700, ext. 1514

Backlog of Pending VBA Claims Creates Veteran Job Opportunities

The backlog of pending Veterans Benefits Administration claims, as of June 28, 2008, had reached 633,277. Of those, 390,933 were rating cases. Since the end of 2004, when 321,458 rating cases were pending, the backlog has grown.

Between 2006 and 2007, the number of pending ratings cases increased by about 14,000. Over 25 percent of the cases were pending for longer than 180 days. At the end of fiscal 2007, the average number of days to complete a claim from date of receipt was 182.5 days, up 5.4 days from the previous year.

Inadequate staffing levels, lack of continuing education, and increased pressure to make quick decisions result in an overall decrease in quality of work. These are among the most common complaints raised by regional office employees interviewed by American Legion staff during regional office quality checks. It is unrealistic to expect VA, with current staffing levels, to continue to process an ever-increasing workload while maintaining quality and timeliness.

The current wartime situation provides an excellent opportunity for VA to actively seek out returning veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, especially those with service-connected disabilities, for employment opportunities within VBA.

THE AMERICAN LEGION'S POSITIONS ON THE DOLE-SHALALA REPORT

The February 2007 exposure of unsanitary conditions in an outpatient facility operated by Walter Reed Army Medical Center led to national outrage.

The American Legion responded swiftly by coordinating with DoD to install a service officer on post to provide transition assistance, including representation before military evaluation boards.

The facility in question, Building 18, was largely occupied by service personnel awaiting medical discharge decisions when the unsanitary conditions were exposed.

The exposure also led to the appointment of former U.S. Sen. Robert Dole and former U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala to lead a presidential commission to study the problem and make recommendations.

The President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors produced six recommendations to improve the process for wounded and ill personnel.

The American Legion generally agrees with the commission's philosophy and intention, although some recommendations require further study and clarification.

Recommendation: Create a patient-centered recovery plan that provides the right care and support at the right time in the right place, for every seriously injured servicemember, through a corps of well-trained recovery coordinators around the country.

The American Legion position: Servicemembers and their dependents can be overwhelmed dealing with the bureaucracies of multiple government departments or agencies. Having one point of contact for all their needs is a step in the right direction, but it is also important to involve existing transition programs offered by DoD, VA, the military and veterans service organizations.

Recommendation: Restructure the disability and compensation system to better coordinate DoD and VA. This can be accomplished by updating and simplifying the disability determination and compensation system, eliminating parallel activities, reducing inequities, and providing a solid base for injured veterans to resume productive lives.

The American Legion positions: VA has a backlog of undecided claims and appeals that will not be relieved until adequate staffing is provided.

The disability examination process, as proposed, would be under sole control of DoD. VA would then assign disability ratings without any input in the medical examination process, creating potential for conflicts.

Any intent to diminish VA's ratings system – which effectively centers on lost economic and career opportunity – would be strongly opposed.

If VA disability compensation leads to forfeited Social Security benefits, the Legion strongly opposes it.

Transition payments should not be considered compensation. They are bridge payments that would be an additional benefit to compensation.

Claimants, under this recommendation, have limited opportunity to appeal DoD medical decisions.

A periodic-review requirement for VA to re-evaluate every three years every veteran whose condition is not classified as permanent and total in nature will strain an already-burdened system.

Recommendation: Aggressive prevention and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

The American Legion position: Full agreement.

Recommendation: Significantly strengthen family-support programs including expanding DoD respite care and extending the Family and Medical Leave Act for up to six months for spouses and parents of the seriously injured.

The American Legion position: The American Legion agrees with the intent of this recommendation and its goals but would add that the benefits must be expanded to include all military personnel who suffer severe injuries, not just those wounded in combat. The American Legion also recommends closely evaluated six-month extensions to accommodate service personnel whose recoveries require more time.

Recommendation: Rapidly transfer patient information between DoD and VA to get clinical and benefit data to users as soon as possible. In addition, DoD and VA should jointly develop an interactive "My eBenefits" Web site that provides a single information source for servicemembers.

The American Legion position: Numerous hearings and millions of dollars have been applied since 2000 to the need for DoD and VA to share critical medical information on patients being seen or transferred out. The American Legion has repeatedly supported the unfettered transfer of medical records between DoD and VA. The American Legion supports a "My eBenefits" site but adds that more direct coordination is needed beyond a shared Web site.

Recommendation: Strongly support Walter Reed Army Medical Center by recruiting and retaining first-rate professionals through 2011 when it closes and is moved to Bethesda, Md.

The American Legion position: The American Legion opposes the closing of Walter Reed Army Medical Center and urges its full funding to ensure the best possible care for servicemembers.

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THE LEGION'S ROLE AT WALTER REED

Legionnaire and U.S. Marine Corps veteran Jerry Johnson plays a critical and evolving role at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington. In March 2007, The American Legion and DoD signed a memorandum of understanding that gave Johnson an office on the hospital campus and a mission to help military men and women through the transition into civilian and VA life.

Since then, Johnson has connected hundreds of wounded and sick servicemembers and newly disabled veterans with resources that can help them in their communities, services like The American Legion's nationwide Heroes to Hometowns program. The American Legion staff position on post gives the organization personal access to men and women who need help with such concerns as medical evaluations, discharge reviews and employment opportunities after separation.

The agreement between DoD and The American Legion was reached after unsanitary conditions at Building 18, an outpatient facility near the Walter Reed campus, were exposed in the media. The facility provided residential care for military personnel in the out-processing transition to their civilian lives.

Johnson, a trained and Legion-certified veterans service officer, meets regularly with military personnel, one-on-one and in group settings, to alert them to the resources and opportunities available as they prepare to return home.

jerry.johnson@amedd.army.mil
(202) 356-1012



Noel St. John

DISABILITY BENEFITS REFORM

The American Legion has persistently fought for improvements to VA's disability claims backlog, the ratings process, and the general disconnect between DoD and VA in terms of medical evaluation and disability evaluation. The independent Veterans Disability Benefits Commission evaluated and assessed veterans benefits provided under the law and provided 113 recommendations for improvement. Here are some of the recommendations and American Legion positions on them:

Recommendation: Update the current rating schedule and keep it up to date.

The American Legion position: The American Legion agrees that, although most major aspects in the rating schedule have been updated over the years, a substantial revision is needed. However, the current rating schedule is not the cause of all major problems with the VA disability compensation process.

Recommendation: VA should develop and implement new criteria specific to post-traumatic stress disorder in the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities. VA should base those criteria on The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and should consider a multidimensional framework for characterizing disability due to PTSD.

The American Legion position: The American Legion strongly supports this recommendation.

Recommendation: Improve claims-processing cycle time by establishing a simplified and expedited process for well-documented claims, using best business practices and maximum feasible use of information technology, and implementing an expedited process by which the claimant can state the claim information is complete and waive the time period (60 days) allowed for further development. Congress should mandate and provide appropriate resources to reduce the VA claims backlog by 50 percent within two years.

The American Legion position: The American Legion opposes this recommendation. The imposition of arbitrary deadlines can often over-simplify cases and lead to a sacrifice of quality.

Recommendation: Congress should increase compensation rates up to 25 percent as an interim and baseline future benefit for loss of quality of life, pending development and implementation of a quality-of-life measure in the rating schedule.

The American Legion position: The American Legion supports an increase in compensation benefits to adequately account for a service-connected disability's impact on a veteran's quality of life.

Recommendation: Congress should eliminate the ban on concurrent receipt for all military retirees and for all those who separated from the military due to service-connected disabilities. Priority should be given to veterans who separated or retired from the military under Chapter 61 with fewer than 20 years of service and a service-connected disability rating greater than 50 percent, or disability as the result of combat.

The American Legion position: The American Legion strongly supports full concurrent receipt of both military retirement pay and VA disability compensation for those who qualify for both.



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PILLAR II: NATIONAL SECURITY


U.S. Marine Corps

To those who have sworn with their lives to protect the United States against enemies near and far, national security is a deeply held value. The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, exposed this nation's vulnerabilities and magnified the importance of this value not only for military veterans, but for all Americans. The American Legion has, since 9/11, passed national resolutions supporting and reconfirming its support for the global war on terrorism and for all who have critical responsibilities in it: the administration; the Congress; the departments of Defense, State and Homeland Security; and, foremost, the troops and civilians fighting to keep acts of terrorism from occurring again on U.S. soil.

The American Legion's national-security position is multifaceted. Key aspects include a well-funded, well-equipped and well-trained military; awareness and surveillance of rogue nations, terrorist groups and global threats to U.S. security around the world; support for the Department of Homeland Security and urging its steadfast protection of U.S. borders, ports and other points of access; a decent quality of life for troops and their families – active-duty and reserve-component alike – that includes reasonable compensation, benefits, health care, child care, and family-support programs; and an efficient and compassionate healing and transition program for wounded and ill warriors.

The American Legion includes more than 14,000 posts around the world and actively assists veterans and families of military personnel. They work closely on transitions back to civilian and community life, using the VA health-care system,



THE LEGION IN IRAQ

ANMCGAF Post 383 in Old Town, Fla., chartered in 2004 and named in honor of all five branches of the military, is becoming a home for the newest generation of Legionnaires. Post 383 Commander Chris Christians says his nephew – Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Christians, an Army paratrooper stationed near Baghdad – has recruited about 20 new American Legion members from the 2nd Battalion, 69th Infantry unit.

"I think it's a great idea to talk to these guys now and get them interested in the Legion," says Christians, a 23-year Marine Corps veteran who served two tours of duty in Vietnam. "People say to wait until they come home and then ask them to join. I say, why wait? Why not sign them up now if we can? They need to know what The American Legion can do for them and what we're doing elsewhere."

TRICARE or TRICARE for Life. The American Legion represents military members during the medical discharge process and assists in their pursuit of education benefits, employment counseling, training, and health care.

Also within the Legion's national-security pillar is a Foreign Relations Commission that works closely with the Department of State to seek peaceful solutions to various world conflicts and to advance U.S. foreign policy around the globe.

The American Legion's national-security positions include:

A Strong National Defense. The American Legion recommends an increase in U.S. defense spending to levels that represent at least 5 percent of gross domestic product to include pay raises for military personnel that keep pace with cost-of-living increases and close the gap between military and private-sector pay.

The Legion recommends that federal funding be provided to strengthen the Navy's ship-building program; to develop the Army's future combat systems; to build Air Force fighters, tankers and specialty aircraft; develop a national missile-defense system and cyberspace defense program; and to support NASA for dominance in space. The Legion urges DoD to use U.S. companies whenever possible for military procurement.

Greater military force end strength, from 1.4 million to 2.1 million, is recommended to reduce stress on the reserve components and National Guard, decrease the number of extended deployments, and better position the United States in the event of a sudden national-security threat outside the Iraq and Afghanistan war theaters.

The American Legion also supports a new U.S. military command devoted solely to African issues – AFRICOM – shipboard or in fixed headquarters on the continent.

The Legion also continues its ongoing support for the Selective Service registration process.

Military Quality of Life. Disabled military retirees earned and deserve full concurrent receipt of their DoD retirement pay and their VA disability compensation, which come from separate budgets, for separate purposes. Today, most disabled military retirees are forced to choose one or the other in what has become known as the "disabled veterans tax."

Military health-care programs must be fully funded without additional enrollment fees or copayment increases for beneficiaries. TRICARE coverage should be made permanent for members of the reserve components, as well.

Military personnel who sustain injuries or illnesses while on duty must be given fair and timely discharge processing, and their transition to civilian life and/or VA health care made seamless. The American Legion strongly supports a continuum of care for disabled veterans after they re-integrate to civilian life. The Legion encourages swift and efficient action to integrate various federal departments, agencies and programs to improve the transition process and sustain that continuum of care.



The American Legion and Disaster Readiness

In many communities throughout the nation, The American Legion plays an active role in local homeland-security efforts. In the aftermath of the hurricanes and floods that devastated the Gulf Coast in 2005, and tornadoes that destroyed entire towns in the Midwest in 2008, American Legion posts became emergency shelters for families and even served as makeshift medical facilities.

American Legion posts work closely with municipal leaders to develop emergency plans, kits and checklists in the event of natural disaster or attack. The American Legion is affiliated with Citizen Corps and hundreds of local disaster-readiness programs.

Homeland Security. The threat of terrorist attacks or other catastrophic disasters in the United States came painfully to light on Sept. 11, 2001, and following the devastating hurricane season of 2005. The American Legion works closely with government at all levels to improve disaster readiness in local communities and, at the national level, to assure a well-funded and efficient Department of Homeland Security is prepared for any eventuality.

Since the Department of Homeland Security's creation after the terrorist attacks of 2001, The American Legion has supported its intent, purpose and arrangement: to harmonize myriad agencies, offices, businesses, community groups and others with readiness responsibilities and quick-response capabilities. The American Legion is an active contributor to that synergy, on the local and national levels. The Legion concurs with the DHS mission to coordinate domestic security, including effective customs operations and drug interdiction.

To help with that effort, the Legion supports funding for the U.S. Coast Guard's "Deepwater" initiatives to rebuild its fleet and modernize assets to more effectively fulfill responsibilities in maritime safety, law enforcement, homeland security, environmental protection and defense.

Foreign Relations. The American Legion encourages increased federal funding for foreign relations and international affairs and for the Department of State's continuous effort to seek peaceful and diplomatic solutions to world conflicts, as well as the DoS initiative for creation of the Civilian Response Corps, for deployment before, during or after military campaigns.

Full Accounting of POW/MIAs. A sacred value of The American Legion is the full accounting and repatriation of fallen U.S. service personnel. The Legion supports Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command activities to locate and repatriate all recoverable remains of U.S. military personnel who have fallen or are missing in foreign battle zones.

THE LEGION'S HELPING HAND

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita will forever be associated with tragedy. But amid the disastrous storm season that battered the Gulf Coast in 2005, the horrific weather also produced tale after tale of Legionnaires fulfilling the final clause of the preamble to the organization's constitution: "to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness."

Post 250 in Fowl River, Ala., and Post 271 in Kaplan, La., were among numerous American Legion facilities across the storm-slammed region to serve as collection and distribution points for food, clothing and other aid to evacuees.

Other posts, such as Dr. O.S. Holiday Memorial Post 27 in DeRidder, La., served as emergency shelters for evacuees. Commander Bill Lofton shut down the Post 27 bingo hall and welcomed 41 new residents displaced by the hurricanes. Legion volunteers cooked, fed and clothed their guests, even transporting diabetic patients to and from the local hospital for treatment. One post was converted into a makeshift kidney dialysis center.

In addition to that support, more than $2.1 million in National Emergency Fund cash grants was awarded to more than 2,500 Legion families affected by the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes.


James V. Carroll


Regis Bossu

Operation Landstuhl

Past American Legion National Commander Paul A. Morin and other top officials in the Legion family toured Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany last year and came away wanting "to make sure every patient had all the comfort items we could provide. I asked the Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion if they would join me in raising $50,000." In just over a month, Operation Landstuhl raised $257,000, and $320,000 by the end of 2007.

The donations bought TVs, phone cards, iPods, laptop computers, DVD players, billiard and ping-pong tables, Sony PlayStations, iTunes cards, clothing and books. All donated dollars went to patient items.

Support for the troops


Brandi Simons

The American Legion conducts thousands of troop-support activities every day across the United States. At small-town posts, Legionnaires and American Legion Auxiliary members prepare care packages and raise money for phone cards and even GPS navigation systems for troops to use in theater. In major cities, Legionnaires coordinate massive welcome-home and support celebrations. When members of the armed forces need support, or even simple acknowledgement of a job well done, The American Legion is there.

Example: Thanks largely to The American Legion's Department of Oklahoma, last Christmas actually felt like Christmas for soldiers in the 45th Infantry Brigade of the Oklahoma National Guard. They enjoyed 10 days at home in late December, thanks to the department's Operation Holiday Homecoming. Legionnaires there sponsored a massive effort that gave more than 2,000 mobilized soldiers a chance to enjoy the holidays with their families before returning to Fort Bliss, Texas, for final pre-deployment training before departing for the Middle East.

More than 40 buses transported soldiers from Fort Bliss to Oklahoma City, Tulsa and McAlester. Soldiers enjoyed a week with their families and friends before finally returning to training Jan. 2.

Gen. Myles Deering, who deployed with the brigade, offered a glowing review of the Oklahoma Legion's Operation Holiday Homecoming. "It's impossible to describe how much this meant to these men and women in uniform," he said. "The American Legion and the state of Oklahoma did a tremendous job."

Example: Veterans at American Legion Post 351 in Fort Myers, Fla., partnered with others in the community to provide wounded soldiers from Fort Gordon a break from hospital life, including free lodging provided by the local Hampton Inn & Suites, free meals, fishing trips and a spa visit. The wounded troops were also recognized by the unfurling of a U.S. Flag large enough to extend across a six-lane highway.

Example: In March 2007, Post 78 in Hyde Park, Mass., adopted an entire National Guard regiment. The Massachusetts National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Battery 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment deployed to Iraq in 2006. "I asked how many people were in the regiment," Post 78 Commander John Moran said. "I thought it would be great if we could take care of all 152 of these people." More than $7,500 was raised to purchase toiletries, DVDs, snacks and suntan lotion, along with various other comfort items. The post also helped organized a homecoming dinner and ceremony. "We call ourselves 'the little post that can,'" Moran said. "Small in numbers, but we're big enough to get things done."



The Blue Star Service Banner was designed and patented in 1917 by World War I Army Capt. Robert L. Queissner of the 5th Ohio Infantry. It quickly became an unofficial symbol to identify a home with a loved one at war. The American Legion resurrected the Blue Star Banner program after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and American Legion posts donate them to families across the country.

Amish man's miracle idea helps home heat bills hit rock bottom

Miracle heaters being given away free with orders for real Amish fireplace mantles to launch the invention that slashes heat bills, but Amish craftsmen under strain of early Christmas rush impose household limit of 2

Saves money: uses about the same energy as a coffee maker, so turn down your thermostat and never be cold again

By Mark Woods
Universal Media Syndicate



GENUINE AMISH MANTLES MADE IN THE USA: Everyone wants to save money on heat bills this winter, so entire Amish communities are working from the crack of dawn to finish. These fine real wood Amish made fireplace mantles are built to last forever. The oak mantle is a real steal at just two hundred ninety-eight dollars because all those who beat the order deadline by calling the National Hotline at 1-800-242-6155 to order the fireplace mantles are actually getting the imported hi-tech Fireless Flame HEAT SURGE miracle heaters for free.

(UMS) Everyone hates high heat bills. But we're all sick and tired of turning down the thermostat and then being cold.

Well now, the popular HEAT SURGE™ miracle heaters are actually being given away free to the general public for the next seven days starting at precisely 8:00 a.m. today.

The only thing local readers have to do is call the National Distribution Hotline before the 7 day deadline with their order for the handmade Amish Fireplace Mantles. Everyone who does is instantly being awarded the miracle heaters absolutely free.

This is all happening to launch the HEAT SURGE Roll-n-Glow™ Amish Fireplace that actually rolls from room to room so you can take the heat with you anywhere. That way, everyone who gets them first can immediately start saving on their heat bills.

For the first time ever, portable Amish fireplaces are being delivered directly to the doors of all those who beat the deadline.

These miracle fireplaces have what's being called the 'Fireless Flame' technology that gives you the peaceful flicker of a real fire but without any flames, fumes, smells, ashes or mess. Everyone is getting them because they require no chimney and no vent. You just plug them in.

The Fireless Flame looks so real it fools everybody but it has no real fire. So what's the catch? Well, the soft spoken Amish craftsmen who hand make the mantles are imposing a strict household limit of 2 to keep up with orders.

"We can barely keep up ever since we started giving heaters away free. With winter just around the corner, everyone's trying to get them. Amish craftsmen are working their fingers to the bone to be sure everyone gets their delivery in time for Christmas," confirms Timothy Milton, National Shipping Director.

"These portable Roll-n-Glow Fireplaces are the latest home decorating sensation. They actually give you a beautifully redecorated room while they quickly heat from wall to wall. It's the only way to dress up every room, stay really warm and slash your heat bills all at the same time," says Josette Holland, Home Makeover Expert to the rich and famous.

And here's the best part. Readers who beat the 7-day order deadline are getting their imported hi-tech miracle heaters free when encased in the Amish built real wood fireplace mantles. The mantles are being handmade in the USA right in the heart of Amish country where they are beautifully hand-rubbed, stained and varnished.

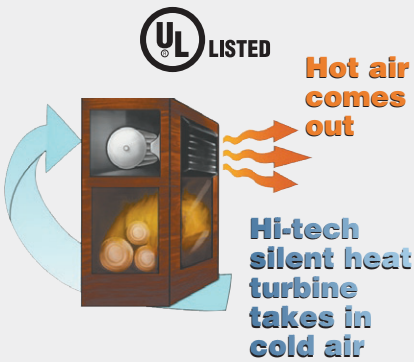
You just can't find custom made Amish mantles like this in the national chain stores. That makes the oak mantle a real steal for just two hundred ninety-eight dollars since the entire cost of the miracle heater is free.

This free giveaway is the best way to slash heating bills and stay warm this fall and winter. The HEAT SURGE Roll-n-Glow Fireplace gives you all the beauty and warmth of a built-in fireplace but it can also save you a ton of money on heating bills.

Even people in California and Florida are flocking to get them so they may never have to turn on their furnace all winter. And since it uses about the same energy as a coffee maker

HEAT SURGE™
Fireless Flame

How It Works: The HEAT SURGE miracle heater is a work of engineering genius from the China coast so advanced, you simply plug it into any standard wall outlet. It uses about the same energy as it takes to run a coffee maker. Yet, it produces an amazing 5,119 BTU's. An on board Powerful hi-tech heat turbine silently forces hot air out into the room so you feel the bone soothing heat instantly. It even has certification of Underwriters Laboratories coveted UL listing. It also comes with a full year Money Back Guarantee.

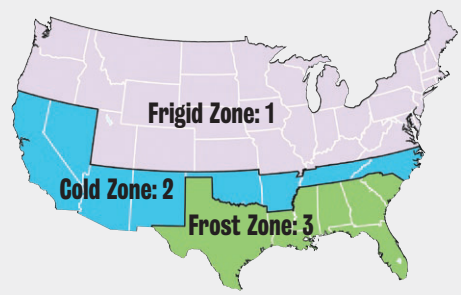


How to get 2 free heaters

The National Toll Free Hotlines are now open. All those who beat the 7 day order deadline to cover the Amish made Fireplace Mantles and shipping get the HEAT SURGE miracle heaters free.

They have imposed a strict limit of 2 per household. Since some home woodworkers want to build their own mantle piece, they are letting people get the imported miracle heater alone for just $249. Or, with the Amish made mantle you get the miracle heater free.

Use the map below to locate the weather zone you live in and call the Hotline number for your zone.



Claim Code: FP4343



ON THEIR WAY: Early Christmas orders have turned country roads into pipelines to the big city delivery system. Everybody wants a fireplace that comes fully assembled with a handmade Amish mantle in oak or cherry and gets delivered by truck right to your door. All you do is plug it in.

EVERYONE LIVING IN THE Frigid Zone: 1	EVERYONE LIVING IN THE Cold Zone: 2	EVERYONE LIVING IN THE Frost Zone: 3
START CALLING AT 8:00 A.M. TODAY	START CALLING AT 8:30 A.M. TODAY	START CALLING AT 9:00 A.M. TODAY
1-800-242-6155	1-800-310-7731	1-800-625-7259

©2008 HEAT SURGE P4239 OF5483R-1

the potential savings are absolutely incredible.

"We are making sure no one gets left out, but you better hurry because entire communities of Amish craftsmen are straining to keep up with demands. For now, we have to turn away dealers in order to let readers have two per household just as long as they call before the deadline," confirms Milton.

It's a really smart decision to get two right now because for only the next 7 days you get both miracle heaters free. That's like putting five hundred bucks right in your pocket and you can save even more money on your monthly heating bills.

"Everyone's calling to get one but those who are getting their Christmas shopping done early are surprising the whole family by getting two. So when lines are busy keep trying or log onto amishfireplaces.com. We promise to get to every call. Then we can have a delivery truck out to your door right away with your beautiful Amish made Roll-n-Glow Fireplace," Milton said.

"You'll instantly feel bone soothing heat in any room. You will never have to be cold again," he said. ■

On the worldwide web:
www.amishfireplaces.com

Rolls anywhere to throw an instant heat wave with no chimney, no vents, no wood and no smoke



EASILY ROLLS ANYWHERE: This is the portable Roll-n-Glow™ Fireplace that easily rolls from bedroom to living room. No vents, no chimney and no tools. Just plug it in.



SAVES ON BILLS: Everyone gets low bills and stays warm and cozy. Naomi Abrams' new Roll-n-Glow Fireplace saves a ton of money and makes her front room look like a million bucks.



SAFE: The Fireless Flame looks so real it fools everybody but there is no real fire. That makes it safe to the touch. It's where the kids will play and the cat and dog will sleep.



FREE: Get this $249 miracle heater free. It is being given away free to all who beat the 7 day order deadline for your choice of the oak or cherry Amish Mantles. The free heater comes already encased.

A LEGACY OF AMERICAN LEGION SERVICE





TOP: *Legionnaires have been at the bedsides of wounded and sick veterans since the end of World War I when disabled veterans were often institutionalized in asylums. The Legion helped create the Veterans Administration.*

BOTTOM: *President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly regarded as the most significant piece of social legislation in the 20th century.*

The American Legion, today comprising 2.7 million wartime veterans, was chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1919, and was founded by men and women who served in the armed forces of the United States during World War I.

Among the first to be exposed to modern warfare with its poisonous gases, overlaying fields of machine-gun fire, trench warfare, tanks and artillery, these soldiers, sailors and Marines suffered both the mental and physical wounds of war.

When the armistice was announced on Nov. 11, 1918, they came home to parades, but little else. There was no comprehensive medical care, no disability compensation, no vocational training, no effective treatment for shell shock, and no pensions for widows and orphans.

The men and women who had won the Great War were expected to come home as if nothing had happened and to pick up where they had left off. They were expected to get on with their lives with little or no assistance from the government whose call they had answered.

This fledging American Legion, conceived primarily by Theodore Roosevelt Jr., took on the mission to follow Lincoln's postbellum call for America to "care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan." Working through a fast-multiplying network of community posts, The American Legion became the nation's largest self-help organization. The Legion established tuberculosis hospitals, found employment for veterans, established a program of monetary grants to assist widows and orphans, and assisted those suffering from the mental wounds of war.

In 1923, The American Legion conducted a nationwide survey to ascertain how World War I veterans were

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readjusting to civilian life. What the Legion survey revealed shocked the nation.

Some veterans of the Great War were homeless, many suffered from what we know today as PTSD, and not a few were housed in jails, mental institutions and county homes. Too many had given up on life, and had no hope and no future. It was not uncommon to see former doughboys, without arms or legs, selling apples and pencils on the street corners of our nation, just trying to survive.

The public outcry was loud and clear. The result was the creation of the Veterans Bureau, an entity that consolidated under one roof the services of many government agencies that had a small piece of the rehabilitation pie. Today, that bureau is known as the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Federal and state laws were enacted, based on the Legion's advice that had been gathered from thousands of service officers who were working with veterans and their families – one on one – in the communities where they lived.

Those laws brought compensation for veterans who had suffered service-connected disabilities. They built a nationwide system of veterans hospitals and clinics and established veterans homes, veterans cemeteries, and pensions for the surviving spouses of those who had given their lives for our country.

Thanks in no small part to the diligence and vision of The American Legion, shell shock has been re-diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD; exposure to Agent Orange is now a recognized service-connected disability due to a study conducted by The American Legion and Columbia University; and veterans suffering from mesothelioma, cancer resulting from exposure to asbestos, and illness due to exposure to ionizing radiation, and its resulting cancers, are now recognized as having service-connected disabilities. This list is long and grows longer each year.

Most, if not all, of these conditions were called to the attention of our government due to the Legion's work with veterans through its Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission.

The American Legion's founders envisioned a future of honor, respect and prosperity for military veterans and the nation they vowed to protect and defend. That vision inspired the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, today known as the GI Bill. The American Legion is recognized as the organization that wrote and created the bill. Ironically, it passed the conference committee of the House and Senate by only one vote, and yet has come to be known as the greatest piece of social legislation ever conceived, triggering a half-century of American economic prosperity.



American Legion members today work closely with active military installations to provide support and stay connected.

The American Legion still believes in the vision of our founders, a vision for a strong America – freedom and opportunity. And The American Legion firmly believes that veterans and their families have earned every benefit awarded to them by a grateful nation because of their selfless service. Indeed, this basic principle was succinctly written into law when the Supreme Court stated in 1983:

"It is ... not irrational for Congress to decide that, even though it will not subsidize substantial lobbying by charities generally, it will subsidize lobbying by veterans organizations. Veterans have 'been obliged to drop their own affairs and take up the burdens of the nation, subjecting themselves to the mental and physical hazards as well as the economic and family detriments which are peculiar to military service and which do not exist in normal civil life.' Our country has a longstanding policy of compensating veterans for their past contributions by providing them numerous advantages. This policy has 'always been deemed to be legitimate.'"

This special report in *The American Legion Magazine* was produced on behalf of our membership, the wartime veterans of the 20th and the 21st century, who can be found in thousands of communities across our great nation.

This is their vision for a strong America.



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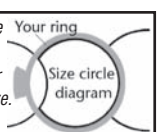
Cut, Color, Carat, Clarity…Chemistry?

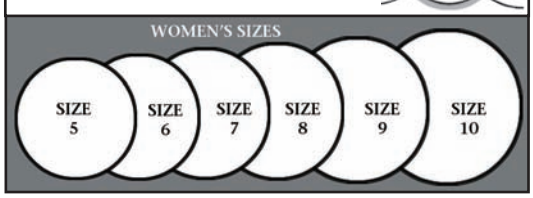
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PILLAR III: AMERICANISM



Many cultural, moral and patriotic values have come under serious attack in the United States in recent years. Prayer has been removed from schools. The U.S. Flag is no longer protected from anarchists. Boy Scouts of America faces serious legal duels in the communities it serves. The institution of marriage is under siege. Immigration laws are defied. References to God have been challenged on U.S. currency, in the Pledge of Allegiance and in the public square, all by a minority of voices whose vision for America is far different from that of our founding fathers. Our nation's very identity is at stake as more and more values are driven toward extinction.

As an organization dedicated to God and country, with a membership of military veterans that takes deep pride in the U.S. Flag and all it means, The American Legion has always been a stalwart champion of patriotism, morality and citizenship. Upon the pillar of Americanism is The American Legion's devotion to law and order, the raising of wholesome youth, respectful observance of patriotic holidays and remembrances, education and law-abiding citizenship.

Among The American Legion's highest Americanism priorities in the 2008 election year are:

U.S. Flag Protection. The U.S. Constitution should be amended to add the following: "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States."

The American Legion joins all the states and an overwhelming majority of citizens in its position that the American flag deserves legal protection from acts of intentional public physical desecration. In 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court declared flag desecration to be a "right" protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution. The American



AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL

Many of the greatest names in the sport spent their teenage summers in American Legion Baseball uniforms. Hall of Famers such as Dave Winfield, Rollie Fingers, Reggie Jackson and Stan Musial still speak of the influence Legion ball had on their lives and careers.

Each year, nearly 100,000 athletes participate in American Legion Baseball, the nation's oldest and most respected amateur baseball program. Posts sponsor teams in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, giving young men wholesome, healthy activity and lessons in sportsmanship, loyalty, respect for rules and fair play.

"I was proud to wear The American Legion uniform because it was the first uniform I had," remembered Stan "The Man" Musial. "The American Legion has supported baseball for many years, and it has an outstanding program for our young players."

Legion disagreed then and reaffirms now that flag desecration is a form of conduct – not speech – that can and should be regulated by law.

All 50 state legislatures have petitioned Congress for a constitutional amendment that would give power to Congress to prohibit such conduct. Poll after poll show that upwards of 80 percent of Americans support flag protection. Lopsided majorities in both houses of Congress have supported a flag amendment, the House of Representatives having passed such a proposed amendment in six consecutive votes; the measure has fallen just slightly short of achieving super-majority in the Senate, leaving it just one vote short of passing in the 109th Congress. As a symbol of our nation, the U.S. Flag belongs to the people, who should be given the power to protect it. The American Legion's position on its protection is inviolate.

Illegal Immigration. The American Legion supports manageable, legal immigration. By multiple resolutions that determine policy, the Legion adamantly opposes illegal immigration, amnesty for those who illegally enter the United States and ineffective measures to prevent illegal border crossing, particularly during a time of war.

The Legion's strategy to combat illegal immigration calls for strong border security, including physical barriers and high-tech surveillance methods; the elimination of economic and social-services benefits for illegal immigrants; employer sanctions against those who knowingly hire illegal immigrants; and the enforcement of existing immigration laws. The Legion also supports new laws that deny illegal immigrants driver's licenses, establish parameters for non-criminal deportation, and designate English as the official language of the U.S. government. The Legion's position on illegal immigration seeks elimination of the visa lottery program, the creation of new visa categories for agricultural workers to replace those who are working illegally, and authority to track foreign visitors to include college students, press, and members of any foreign diplomatic corps.

Illegal immigration stands as one of the most serious problems facing America, with as many as 20 million illegal immigrants inside our borders and billions of dollars spent providing social services, education and jobs for them. The American Legion supports the law on this matter and strongly urges the U.S. government to enforce it.

Voter Registration and Participation. The American Legion connects good government with active citizen participation in the electoral process. Legion posts throughout the country offer their services and facilities to stimulate registration and turnout at the polls. Posts also provide facilities and opportunities for non-partisan voter-education forums and debates. Under the provisions of its federal charter, it is important to note, The American Legion is prohibited from supporting, opposing or providing aid to any political party or any candidate for public office.

Boy Scouts of America. The American Legion vigorously opposes attempts to strip the Boy Scouts of public support, sponsorship and facility space due to the organization's membership or leadership criteria. The Scouts teach skills, build character, and provide a healthy and wholesome outlet for young Americans. The organization should not be punished or persecuted for acknowledging God in its oath or for setting leadership restrictions based on a moral code that the majority of Americans endorse.

The Pledge of Allegiance. Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance by students and teachers in our nation's schools should be a regular part of school activities and events. In support of keeping "under God" in the pledge, The American Legion affirms that pledging allegiance to the flag is the voluntary offering of a patriotic oath to the nation; that no one should be denied this opportunity; and that the removal of these words will set a precedent that questions the propriety of numerous references to a supreme being in historical documents, on currency and on many of our government buildings, to include the U.S. Supreme Court.

Establishment-Clause Lawsuits. The American Legion is dedicated to combating the secular cleansing of our American heritage, performed by lawsuits that attack the Boy Scouts, the public display of the Ten Commandments and other symbols of America's religious history. The authority given by Congress to the courts to impose damages, or attorney fees, in establishment-clause cases is being used by the American Civil Liberties Union and others to compel municipalities, state and federal agencies, along with private groups, to cast off religious association, often in pursuit of tax-funded attorney fees.


James V. Carroll

THE AMERICAN LEGION LEGACY RUN

"My dad had an impact on my life that no one else could have on me. He was so many things to me; he was my support, my guide, my confidant and my comfort. Losing him was the worst thing that I have ever had happen in my life. I would like to honor him and would like to make him and my family proud by achieving my goals. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to make this happen."

The words of a college student whose military father lost his life after the tragic terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, demonstrate just how important it is to live up to one of The American Legion's – and our nation's – most important obligations.

Within weeks of the attacks, The American Legion Legacy Scholarship was established to help young people whose parents have lost their lives serving in the amed forces in the years following 9/11. Children of U.S. military personnel killed at war are entitled to receive federal money toward their college educations, but these funds do not cover the entire cost, and the gap widens as college tuitions and expenses continue to climb. It is especially difficult for a single parent to afford.

The goal of The American Legion Legacy Scholarship fund is $20 million, enough to fund college educations for young people years from now, through earnings on the principal. To reach that goal, The American Legion relies heavily on one of its most popular and fast-growing programs: The American Legion Riders.

Motorcycle-riding veterans from across the country have joined the Legion Riders for annual cross-country treks, raising funds while riding from Indianapolis to national conventions in Salt Lake City, Reno, Nev., and Phoenix. The rides have raised more than $1 million for the scholarship program, which is already distributing scholarship dollars while simultaneously building up the principal.

Legion Riders chapters have flourished in recent years and became an official program of the organization in 2007. It has since expanded to more than 800 chapters.

www.legion.org/programs/legacyrun/overview
www.americanlegionriders.net



AMERICAN LEGION BOYS NATION

Presidents, governors, members of Congress and local community servants are among thousands of young men who learned the way the U.S. government works by participating in American Legion Boys Nation.

Boys Nation participants are selected from Boys State programs across the country. Each delegate represents his state as a senator. An intense week of training and education in the legislative process also includes tours of Washington monuments and memorials, along with an occasional visit from the president.

Boys Nation began in 1946 at American University in Washington. Boys State began in 1935 in Illinois as an effort to counter fascist youth camps springing up around the country at the time. At Boys State, high-school juniors learn the rights, privileges and responsibilities of a franchised citizen.



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TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Michael Junkins shipped out to Iraq on the USS *Bulkeley* in February 2004, leaving his wife Sabrina and their 4-year-old daughter Cassie behind in Virginia.

Three days later, the Junkins' furnace broke down during one of the state's coldest winters. A replacement would cost the family $8,000. Sabrina pulled together most of the money, but not all. The answer to the family's crisis came in the form of The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance program, which helps military and veteran families with minor children at home.

Jerry Howard, the Department of Virginia's Children & Youth chairman, was able to secure $2,300 through TFA to cover the remaining cost.

Through TFA, a local American Legion post can call upon the national organization for cash assistance to help meet basic needs of veterans' children.

Funding for TFA comes through The American Legion Endowment Fund. In 2007, nearly 1,200 children were helped by the fund, amounting to more than $562,100 in disbursements from National Headquarters.



FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK

The American Legion's Family Support Network is ready to provide immediate assistance to U.S. military personnel and their families whose lives have been directly affected by the war on terrorism.

As National Guardsmen and reserve units are mobilized in record numbers, the families of these men and women often find themselves unable to meet normal monthly expenses and needing assistance for a variety of everyday chores like grocery shopping, child care, mowing the grass, fixing the car and other routine household jobs.

To address these issues, The American Legion has a nationwide toll-free telephone number for servicemembers and their families to call for assistance. Requests also can be made online. All inquiries are referred to The American Legion department in which the call originated. Departments relay the collected information to a local American Legion post. The local post then contacts the military servicemember or family to see how assistance can be provided locally. Since the creation of the Family Support Network during the Gulf War, thousands of American Legion posts have responded to meet these families' needs.

Posts are reminded that families in financial need with minor children are encouraged to call on the Temporary Financial Assistance program at National Headquarters to assist. Otherwise, it is up to local posts to provide or develop the resources necessary to meet the need.

More than 2,200 requests through the Family Support Network came to National Headquarters in 2007. Most cases are handled locally without notification or involvement from the national organization. Creating an ongoing and active relationship with local military units allows posts to respond immediately when needs arise.

www.legion.org/fsn
familysupport@legion.org
(800) 504-4098

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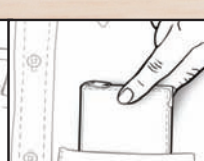
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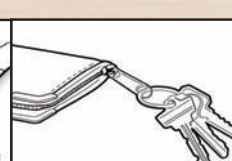
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PILLAR IV: CHILDREN & YOUTH


Steve Niedorf

The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth manages a pillar of service guided by three main objectives: to strengthen the family unit; to support quality organizations that provide services for children and youth; and to provide communities with well-rounded programs that meet the physical, educational, emotional and spiritual needs of young people. The commission works to provide hope for children who face health, safety, discipline or home-life challenges and provides opportunities for young people to succeed.

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation provides more than $500,000 in grants to nonprofit organizations each year that work to improve the lives of young people. These grants have aided organ-donor campaigns, supported efforts to help military children cope with deployment or loss of a parent, and funded projects that increased public awareness of Huntington's Disease, autism, Reyes Syndrome, meningitis, spina bifida, diabetes, cancer and other conditions.

The Commission on Children & Youth has focused recent attention on several important national programs, including the Children's Miracle Network, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Special Olympics, youth suicide prevention, Halloween safety, Family Support Network and Temporary Financial Assistance for families of the deployed, and Operation: Military Kids, among others.

The American Legion has been a staunch supporter for the children and youth of our nation since its founding in 1919. The commitment continues today for the National Commission on Children & Youth, as it seeks to improve the well-being of all children. The key to the future of a free and prosperous country, knows every generation of veterans, is held by the children and youth of today. The Legion strongly supports traditional family values, assistance for at-risk children and activities that promote their healthy and wholesome development. While there is no way of knowing what issues will face our youth tomorrow, our survival may well depend on the quality of care, education and training that we, as parents and citizens, provide for young people today.

The American Legion's Children & Youth pillar includes positions on:

THE SAMSUNG SCHOLARSHIP

After researching dozens of veterans organizations, Samsung Group, a worldwide leader in electronics, chose The American Legion in 1995 to administer an endowed scholarship fund of $5 million. The endowment was established to show appreciation to U.S. veterans who came to the aid of Korea during its struggle against communist forces during the Korean War. The scholarship is for undergraduate study only and may be used for tuition, books, fees, and room and board.

Seven to 10 students are chosen each year for the $20,000 scholarships, which are awarded to direct descendants of U.S. wartime veterans.

Child Pornography. The Legion opposes any attempts to weaken U.S. laws governing production, sale and distribution of pornographic materials.

Catastrophic Illness. The American Legion supports enacting legislation to financially assist families facing catastrophic illness of a child.

Intellectual Disabilities. The American Legion supports continuing research, and early intervention efforts, to prevent intellectual disabilities, to include research on the development and function of the nervous system, fetal treatments and gene therapy to correct abnormalities produced by defective genes, and early intervention programs with high-risk infants and children.

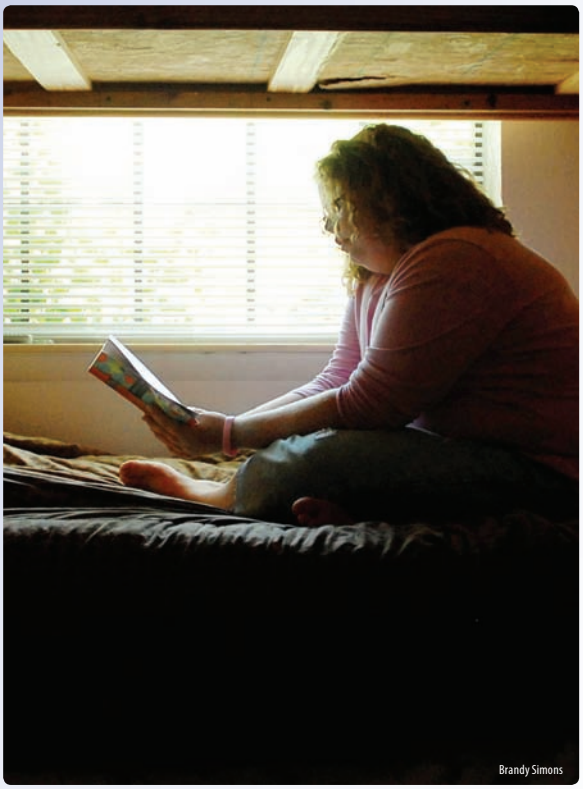
Immunization for Needy Children. The Legion urges federal funding for state and local health agencies to ensure that indigent children are afforded the opportunity to receive needed vaccines and treatments.

Family Integrity. The Legion promotes the family as the cornerstone of society and supports National Family Week in November. The Legion further recognizes that the natural family is the fundamental unit, inscribed in human nature and centered on the voluntary union of a man and woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage.

Media Violence. The American Legion supports appropriate state and federal legislation to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity and immoral expressions in movies, television programs, news, video games and the Internet.

Drug Abuse. The American Legion fully supports adequate funding for all border, state, federal and military drug-trafficking prevention programs to keep illegal substances from reaching our nation's young people.

Child Sexual Exploitation. The American Legion supports appropriate legislation aimed at the prevention, investigation and prosecution of child sexual exploitation and seeks to empower the public to take immediate and direct action to enforce a zero-tolerance policy on the problem.


Brandy Simons

Child Welfare Foundation

Not all American children grow up with the same opportunities. Some face physical disabilities, parenting problems and even homelessness. For thousands, each day is a challenge marked by pain, prayer and perseverance. Many require specialized care. That is why The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation exists.

Established in 1954, the foundation was developed to collect donations from individuals who wished to contribute to the betterment of children in this country. To date, more than $9 million has been awarded to organizations to support worthwhile projects through the dissemination of information to the general public and specific target groups.

In 2007, the foundation awarded grants totaling $530,700 to 18 nonprofit organizations. Included among those grants was $64,000 for The American Legion Children's Home at Ponca City, Okla., for the home's "American Legion Children's Home National Awareness Initiative." This grant went toward producing DVDs, brochures and a Web site in support of a national campaign to raise awareness and funds for the children's home. Other 2007 grants went to such groups as the National Autism Center, the Childhood Leukemia Foundation and Our Military Kids, Inc.

www.legion.org/cwf/

It's Who We Are

When Grand Dad used to say "Grandma,
I'm headed to the Legion Hall"
I thought the Legion Hall was just some
place he went
to have a beer and play some cards with all his
buddies at the bar
But I didn't know what being in the Legion meant ...
to him and all his friends
until I stood by Grand Dad's grave
said my "gone for good goodbye" ...
I swore I wouldn't cry
But one by one nearly two hundred men stepped up,
saluted him and then
they stood there at attention 'til everyone
was through
I stopped one just to ask him "Sir, is that what
you always do?" He said ...

It's not just something that we do ... It's who we are
We proudly wore the uniform and we
still do our part
Because our love for country lives not just on our lips
but deep in our hearts ...
It's not just something that we do ... It's who we are

Just before he turned to leave
He shook my hand, I grabbed his sleeve and said,
"I wish there were a lot more folks like you"
He smiled at me and said, "There are, but unless
you look real hard
chances are you'll seldom see us on the news"
"But all across the nation there are those great
patriots in civilian clothes
who've paid a price for freedom because we still
believe
the freedom our forefathers left isn't an entitlement
but it's our sacred duty to protect and serve
this land
I said, "I wish I could do something"
He said, "Son, we're all Americans and ...
It's not just something that we do ... It's who we are
We don't have to be in uniform to do our part
When our love for country lives not just on our lips
but deep in our hearts ...

It's not just something that we do ... It's who we are
From old brown shoes to desert boots
The future counts on me and you and
Who we are

Country music star Michael Peterson wrote "It's Who We Are" in honor of The American Legion.
The song appears on the DVD of the same name available for purchase for $12.
Proceeds from sales are used to help fund The American Legion Legacy Scholarship fund.

https://join.legion.org/peterson/



American Legion National Commander Marty Conatser has belonged to Lincoln Post 102 in Deland, Ill., for 30 years. Tom Strattman

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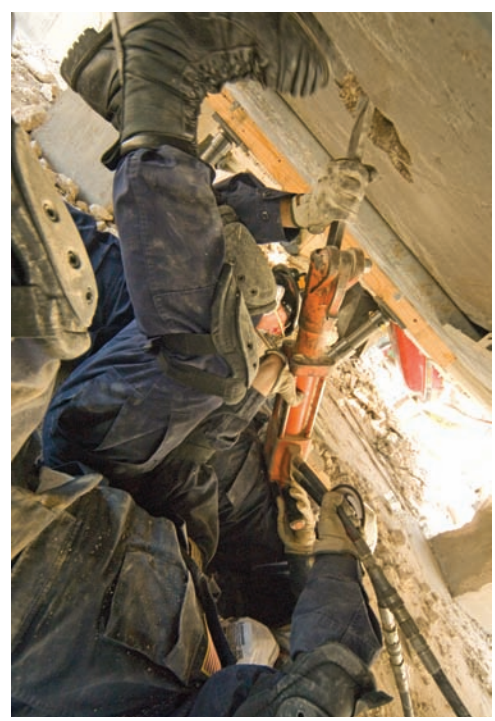
Since 9/11, thousands of emergency responders have flocked to the curious mock town of Disaster City to train for terrorist attacks and natural disasters.

BY SUE RUSSELL

Billy Parker gazes at the wreckage and devastation. An underground explosion has "pancaked" a multi-story government building into a veritable concrete layer cake. Cars are crumpled like soda cans between gigantic concrete slabs, once separate floors of the building. A crushed brown Pontiac's bumper sticker aptly states, "I'd rather be camping." Surveying the destruction, Parker, a former firefighter and paramedic, is inscrutable.

This is Disaster City, where he works. A 52-acre mock town in College Station, Texas, it is a sprawling, purpose-built, search-and-rescue training facility with concrete rubble piles and an impressive array of life-sized, collapsible structures that include a cinema and strip mall. Inside the shell of an office complex, an eerie labyrinth of debris-ridden hallways leads to a space where upturned metal desks are strewn like children's playthings. Outside, derailed and mangled train carriages – donated by Amtrak in return for training – are rigged to simulate hazardous liquid spills by leaking water.

Disaster City is operated by the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) and Texas A&M University. Here, experts such as Parker provide emergency responders with cutting-edge training in homeland security and natural-disaster response by creating complex, catastrophic scenarios for incredibly lifelike search-and-rescue drills.



A TEEX crewman breaches a reinforced concrete floor using a hydraulic jackhammer in Disaster City's collapsed parking structure. Martial Voitier

For a respected urban search-and-rescue guru, internationally known in his field, Parker is incredibly unassuming. A 28-year veteran of TEEX, he is also Disaster City's Urban Search & Rescue program director. On this particular day, he is working a practice exercise with a five-person squad from the elite, 450-strong Texas Task Force 1 (TX-TF1), one of only 28 federally sponsored, national response teams in the country.

After 9/11, Parker was one of 74 TX-TF1 members deployed to Ground Zero. After 2005's devastating hurricane season, he led 41 water strike team members into New Orleans, directing the rescue of about 13,000 victims. They plucked people from rooftops, apartment buildings and nursing homes. They also helped 147 patients leave University Hospital, many with chest and trachea tubes attached.

Today's mock scenario: a terrorist's bomb has collapsed a government building and parking garage, trapping people and cars. In a real attack, emergency responders would have no clue if they were dealing with terrorism or some other catastrophe. The squad is told only that there has been an explosion. Either way, the response strategies are remarkably similar.

They are in Building 133, which embodies simulations of four historic disasters. The collapsed concrete floors were modeled on the World Trade Center's underground parking garage after



Urban search-and-rescue workers hoist an injured "victim" through an opening in the floor above them at Building 133. Searching for survivors works best when it's done "from the bottom up." Martial Voitier

Islamic terrorists bombed it in 1993. Two damaged, circular concrete columns replicate 9/11 damage at the Pentagon. A steep, concrete ravine between two connected floors mirrors Mexico City's massive 1985 earthquake that separated outside walls from buildings.

Lastly, a 100-square-foot hanging concrete slab replicates part of the Alfred R. Murrah building's roof that dangled precariously after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. While it didn't fall, it suggested a good training opportunity to Urban Search & Rescue Division Director Bob McKee. He, Parker and their colleagues then devised solutions. In one training scenario, rescuers rappel down it, drill it, and eventually tie it back with steel cables.

In this exercise, the squad is focused on Building 133's collapsed concrete floors. They start with general reconnaissance and take readings to check for toxic spills, noxious fumes or dangerous chemicals. Once the air tests clear, work can begin, but pockets of danger can form in confined spaces, so they will test repeatedly. Parker, squad leader Brett Dixon and a couple of rescue specialists ease their frames into a shallow space between two enormous slabs of concrete edged with jagged rebar.

They must shore up the solid concrete above them, then "breach and break," as they call it, to search for victims. Since drilling already-compromised concrete can trigger a further collapse, or endanger an unseen victim above, they move slowly and meticulously. Parker warns everyone to stay vigilant for any new fractures or ominous sounds from the building.

Searches are safest when worked from the bottom up. "Typically, we like to shore our way in for protection," Parker explains. Here, aluminum hydraulic shoring is put in place to stabilize the concrete. They then drill a tiny inspection hole, through which they can snake up the probe of an atmospheric monitor to check for combustible vapors and high concentrations of carbon monoxide. All clear.

The team inserts a specialized camera through the inspection hole to do a 360-degree sweep above. They visually assess the structural damage and spot one conscious but injured victim. The search team will have to go in. Reassured that no one is directly above the drill spot, they move faster to enlarge the hole.

Lying on his back, Dixon braces his feet on the concrete above to help him support a 45-pound

jackhammer, and drills upward. An oxygen/acetylene torch burns out the rebar, which falls away like broken jail bars. Entering the floor above, the team shores again for safety. Then, with the rescue route finally clear, the victim is removed and the exercise is completed.

Volunteer victims, recruited from the university and community, can lie for hours awaiting rescue by humans or dogs. Concrete rubble piles must be regularly restructured to outsmart the canines who quickly memorize the positions of "hides," the tiny crawl spaces where victims wait silently for their scents to be picked up. It can be stifling. Once, a TEEX member playing a volunteer victim dozed off and started snoring. It's the only time anyone can remember Billy Parker getting mad.

Parker, a Texan in his mid-50s, exudes a quiet, inner confidence. He's built it up over time. He started by working weather disasters such as tornadoes. In 1999, tragedy hit close to home when a bonfire built by Texas A&M students collapsed, killing 12. Yet Parker isn't haunted by all he's seen. He calls himself "the ultimate optimist."

A devoted husband and father, he's also a man of strong faith, and immediately after he got his first fire and paramedic certifications, he knew he'd found his calling. "Obviously, God's been very good to me, because there are very few people in this world who have been to the incidents I've been to, and lived to share the stories with others," he says.

Calm and responsible, Parker admits being an adrenaline junkie. "I like the big incidents, being in the big game at the center of the action. When I was a firefighter/paramedic, I wanted to be in the busiest station, running the most calls, going to the most fires."

In the thick of a crisis, Parker finds it helpful to stay emotionally detached. "I stay pretty focused on what I call 'in the zone' on an adrenaline high," he says. "It's afterwards that I really feel the emotions of what took place. Katrina was a bad

Robot Grand Prix

In November, an army of robots and their nimble-fingered handlers will visit Disaster City for the fourth Department of Homeland Security and National Institutes of Standards & Technology robot evaluation exercise. Emergency responders dream up tests to gauge the robots' usefulness in disaster response. In the exercise, robots must navigate wreckage, obstacle courses and mazes. They must climb walls, stairs and debris piles, and exhibit qualities such as dexterity, mobility, speed and endurance.



AirRobot, which took part in the 2007 search robot evaluation at Disaster City, provides responders with a unique vantage in disaster situations.

Last year, the robots' visual acuity was tested with a low-tech eye chart, just like those used by optometrists. One robot actually hauled an injured dummy out of harm's way. Battery life remains the real challenge. The crowd-pleaser in 2007 was the AirRobot, a 2.2-pound wire aircraft that looks something like a flying saucer, three feet across, that takes off vertically. It can fly up to 25 mph, reach heights up to 3,000 feet, and has a range of about 1,600 feet.

"I liked its effortless, nearly silent hover," says TEEX's Martial Voitier. "It's GPS-controlled, so it can hold position on breezy days, and will return to its position if it is pushed or bumped. It has a good wireless camera and is a very neat robot."



A simulated building collapse acts as a test for the Negotiator Tactical Surveillance Robot.

The cobra-like Active Scope Camera weighs only 10 pounds, is more than 25 feet long, and advances into crevices at two inches per second while transmitting images.

Also popular: the Eyeball R1 (aka "throwbot"), a 1.25-pound sphere that's easy to roll into inaccessible places.

situation, but we helped 13,000 people and I feel very satisfied with that."

Deployed to 2003's space shuttle *Columbia* recovery mission, Parker was gratified when their small response team found remains from all seven astronauts in just nine days. "The rewards aren't always finding somebody alive," he says. "Sometimes it's giving family members the opportunity to say goodbye to loved ones."

Training Globally. The expertise of Parker, McKee, Dixon and their roster of top-notch colleagues help police, SWAT teams, firefighters, military, medical staff and other groups learn to manage crises at Disaster City. They come from all over the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Taiwan and Japan. Some responders have specific interests. "We will custom-tailor a training scenario and emergency plan accordingly," McKee says.

Brian Locke, director of Operational Preparedness & Resilience at the U.K.'s Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service is a six-time visitor to Disaster City. "Terrorism is a threat that hangs over everybody these days," he says. He wanted his staff to experience Disaster City and to learn from instructors "who can talk from experience of having done it in a real-life scenario. We didn't find anything like that anywhere else in the world. It's incredible."

Another repeat visitor is Brian Giachino, operations chief of the Iowa Task Force, one of 33 state and regional search-and-rescue teams. The climax of each course is a final, full-blown, real-time exercise, after which participants are given feedback on their performances. It's the complex, final Operation Readiness exercise that really sold Giachino.

"Wow, is that valuable," Giachino says. "Normally, you train and come home, and have to set up your own exercise and don't have resources." Disaster City inspired Giachino to acquire more sophisticated communication systems at home, along with more search-and-rescue canines. "Although there's some very sophisticated acoustic and seismic equipment, it's just so time-intensive to canvass an area," he says. "The canines are not supremely reliable, but if they're on their game and scent travel is good that day, they can go toe to toe with the electronic equipment."



Denise Corliss and her canine, Bretagne, search Disaster City's wooden rubble pile, which simulates a large, collapsed, wood-framed structure. Martial Voitier

It's not all about debris and rubble at Disaster City. Administrators and supervisors come to hone their incident management, resource coordination and information-management skills. The state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Training Center (EOTC) is a 14,000-square-foot incident command post that McKee proudly calls "eye candy at its best." From this logistics and planning hub, operations staff can control scenarios happening outside.

EOTC director and Army retiree David Nott also emphasizes situation awareness and decision-making. What is the top decision-making blunder? "Not making a decision, however small or big, at the appropriate time," he says.

Nott's students also participate in a final, highly orchestrated incident-command training exercise that plays out in real time, and in sequence. Sometimes, the intensity and realism proves overwhelming. "I've actually had people have to go step outside just to make sure the world was OK," Nott says.



A victim's-eye view of a rescue from the wooden rubble pile during a hurricane simulation at Disaster City. Two concepts are emphasized during training: situational awareness and decision-making. Realistic training scenarios, sometimes overwhelming in their intensity, offer plenty of opportunities for decisive action under pressure. Martial Voitier

A special bond exists among those who work or volunteer to perform dangerous search-and-rescue missions. "It's a family within a family," Parker says. "It's a job, but it's not really a job. We're not kin by blood, but we're kin by incidents, by our common beliefs, and by our common goals in life to help our fellow man."

Learning from the Past. Everything changed in the search-and-rescue world after 9/11; simply put, funding for exercises flowed. TEEX now has a $6.2-million equipment cache, ready to go in pre-packed kits tailored to different deployment sizes. To be totally self-sufficient, teams carry generators, fuel, medicines, cardiac monitors, hazardous material gear, gas-detection tubes and more.

Because disasters are chaotic and dynamic affairs, communication is critical. The 9/11 attacks and Hurricane Katrina exposed the need for overhaul in that area, and things have improved. "We're all talking the same language," Parker observes. As for McKee, he's most excited by wireless technologies and advances in personal tracking and locator devices.

Since 9/11, many rescue teams have invested in radiation monitors and personal protective equipment. Many firefighters and EMS workers have gas and chemical detectors, and firefighters are also likely to have previously unaffordable construction tools. Robots? Not so much. Why buy a robot that may be used once a decade, when you could buy a few badly needed $10,000 boats for the inevitable flood?

Parker makes the point that no amount of equipment can substitute for preparation "to manage a disaster, mitigate it and respond to it. But the emergency-response community communicates better now and is constantly training. I think we've built scenarios to better prepare it to deal with just about anything we could conceivably think of."

Sue Russell is a writer living in California.



Just as America changed forever after 9/11, so did the field of search-and-rescue. Teams now carry more equipment, including generators, cardiac monitors, hazardous material gear and gas-detection tubes. Martial Voitier

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AS HEARD ON PAUL HARVEY NEWS

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Q. What advantages does infrared quartz tube heating source have over other heating source products?

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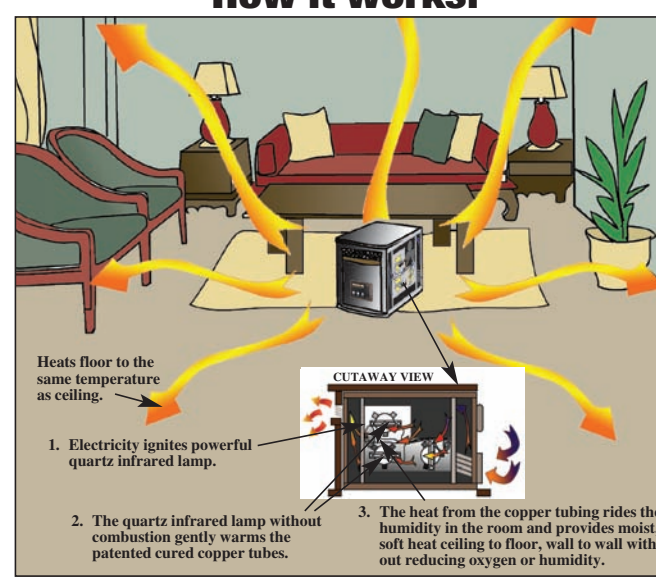
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End of interview.

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A Promise Fulfilled

U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards lives up to the legacy of his mentor, a man remembered as 'Mr. Veteran.'


James V. Carroll

Texas Democrat Chet Edwards never served in the U.S. military, but his 18 years in Congress have been shaped by those who did.

Until his district map was redrawn in 2003, Edwards counted among his constituents the massive Fort Hood Army community, and a strong population of military retirees and veterans who make central Texas their home. Locally, he no longer has Fort Hood, but he does represent Commander in Chief George W. Bush's hometown of Crawford, and has fought diligently to keep the Waco VA Medical Center from closing. Nationally, he's made an even bigger impact on the lives of veterans.

Rep. Edwards received The American Legion's 2008 Distinguished Public Service Award after shepherding the largest one-year funding increase in the history of VA – $11.8 billion – while serving on the powerful House Appropriations Committee. "Chet went above and beyond in keeping us informed and telling the truth," American Legion National Commander Marty Conatser said when presenting the award in early April.

"To be a politician accused of telling the truth – what a special thing," Edwards quipped in response.

The award, he said, "was an honor I will always cherish. I know the real heroes are our nation's veterans. I am simply fighting to provide the funding and services that our veterans have already earned through their service and sacrifice to our country."

Edwards told Legionnaires gathered at the 48th Washington Conference that his efforts to raise the bar on VA health-care funding are not a one-time shot. "In the new Congress, with your partnership, it will be a new day for America's veterans. We know there is so much more that needs to be done."

Edwards recently spoke with *The American Legion Magazine.*

The federal funding mill

■ **STEP 1:** Actuaries project VA's health-care demands for the next fiscal year, and Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) directors across the country provide their projections. VA delivers that information to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which may or may not agree.

■ **STEP 2:** The Office of Management and Budget puts a dollar figure on the need. That's the president's request.

■ **STEP 3:** OMB and VA take a recommendation to Congress.

■ **STEP 4:** Veterans service organizations weigh in with their recommendations. The American Legion makes its case during the national commander's testimony in September.

■ **STEP 5:** The House passes a budget resolution, which may be – and usually is – an altogether different amount from what the White House recommended. The Senate passes a budget resolution. This merely gives congressional authorization for spending, but it does not guarantee money.

Budget resolutions typically pass Congress in late spring or early summer. In past congresses, the budget resolution level for VA and the VA appropriations bill level have not often matched. That changed last year.

Q: *Your relationship with veterans runs deep. What's the source of that?*
A: My political mentor was Olin E. "Tiger" Teague, who earned two Silver Stars and three Bronze Stars in World War II, fighting in Europe. He chaired the VA committee for over a decade, and was known as "Mr. Veteran" in Congress. When he first approached me to run for office in 1978, he asked me to make one promise to him. He asked me to never forget veterans if I got elected. I don't make a lot of promises, but that's one commitment I intend to keep.

My father was a naval aviator in World War II, and having represented Fort Hood for 14 years in Congress, including the first war in Iraq, I have seen up close and firsthand the incredible sacrifices made by our servicemen and women, and their families. Those are reasons why I am so passionate about honoring and respecting those who have served our country in uniform.

Q: *The Waco VA Medical Center in your district was pegged for closure. Now it's off the chopping block. What happened?*
A: The CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) recommendation to close the Waco VA was based on faulty data that did not take into account, among other things, the need for medical care for our returning Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. I felt it would have been a moral outrage to close the Waco VA hospital during a time of war, when Fort Hood, with two divisions serving continuously in Iraq, was so close by.

One other point: the Waco VA has long been a Center of Excellence for PTSD. It has one of the few in-house long-term PTSD programs in the country, and it's a very respected one. CARES got it wrong. This was an example of democracy working. The local veterans led the fight. Sen. (Kay Bailey) Hutchison and I joined with them. It was a great victory for veterans. Now, the Waco VA is not just a key resource for Texas veterans. It is a key resource for blind rehab and PTSD all over the country.

Q: *Veterans in many areas still await hospitals recommended for construction under CARES. Isn't that an example of the gap between budget promises and real federal funding?*
A: The congressional budgeting process is confusing to most people. It's a three-step process. First, we have a budget resolution that sets out broad parameters of the federal budget. Then, the appropriations committee divides up the pie and says how much we get for the VA and Military Construction Committee vs. the other subcommittees. That's a critical part of the process that goes largely unnoticed. Then, finally, on my subcommittee, we go to work deciding exactly how those dollars are spent. The battle is won or lost at the budget committee level and the allocation level.

Just because a project is authorized does not mean it's funded. There are projects authorized for decades that were never funded. Appropriations is where the rubber meets the road. When I came in as chairman in January 2007, my frustration was that veterans health care and benefits programs had been on a treadmill for the past decade. While there were increases in the budget, they seldom kept up with inflation and population growth. That is why I am so excited that we passed – in just 12 months – an $11.8 billion increase.

Q: *In 2005, The American Legion and many members of Congress identified a looming shortfall in the VA budget. When it hit and emergency funding was needed, the problem was connected to unanticipated demand from Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. How do you prevent that from happening again?*

■ **STEP 6:** Using the budget resolution-authorized level as a guide, the Subcommittee for VA and Military Construction begins hearings that run through the spring. It assesses needs and justifies costs.

All the House appropriations subcommittees mark up their bills. Each appropriations bill then passes through the full appropriations committee, and is ultimately sent to the floor and voted on in the House, usually by July. The Senate typically follows a later schedule for its appropriations bills. Once the Senate version is completed and passed, House and Senate conference committee members are appointed to meet and iron out any differences. The conference committee reports a final agreement that is then passed in both chambers before it is sent to the president.

■ **STEP 7:** The appropriations act is signed into law or vetoed.

■ **STEP 8:** Funding is allocated to VISNs – administrative VA regions that may include multiple states and parts of neighboring states.

A: First, we adequately fund the VA health-care system. That $11.8-billion increase – about 95 percent of that goes to the VA health-care system. That's the first key step. The second is that I added report language to the VA appropriations bill two years ago to require VA to report detailed information quarterly to Congress, so that we don't have to wait until the fourth quarter of a fiscal year to find out that the VA health-care system is in a crisis. The third thing I would add to that is, I find The American Legion, along with our local hospitals and veterans, plays an instrumental role in providing feedback to Congress on what's really happening in the VA system. The American Legion was an instrumental partner in passing the largest increase in VA health-care benefits funding in the 77-year history of VA. The American Legion really does make a difference – a big difference.

Eleven days after (former) Secretary (Jim) Nicholson was confirmed, he said the VA health-care system had all the money it needed. I said, "Well sir, with all due respect, your staff has not given you the true facts."

I knew that to be the case, because I had heard from The American Legion and from our local veterans, and from employees working in the VA hospitals. Those three things – adequate budgets, quarterly reports from VA, and constant outreach at the grass-roots level – are the way we prevent a repeat of a VA health-care system in crisis.

Q: *What are some of the most important accomplishments for veterans so far from the 110th Congress?*
A: We increased funding for VA more in one year than in the previous six years in Congress. By the end of this year, we will have increased it more in two years than in the previous 12. Most of that funding was focused on improving VA health care. As a result, VA has hired 1,335 new doctors and 4,968 new nurses and nurse assistants. They are in the process of plussing up medical-services personnel by 15,000. What that means to an individual veteran is better health care and shorter waiting times for their medical services.

We provided a huge increase, and an important one, for VA mental health-care services because of the needs of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans coming home. We added funding for 3,100 new claims processors to reduce the unfair six-month waiting times for veterans to have their benefits decided. For the first time since 1979, we increased VA gas mileage, from 11 cents to 28.5 cents per mile, for veterans who have to drive long distances to receive their care. To some veterans, that may not seem like a lot. For some veterans, it's the difference between being able to afford to go to the VA hospital or not. We increased medical research, in real dollars, above inflation for the first time in over a decade. We committed over $1 billion for major construction projects to ensure we don't have a Walter Reed Annex 18 tragedy at VA. Those are just some of the things.

"It's just flat unfair to say that a veteran in some parts of the country, making $30,000 a year, is too wealthy to receive VA health care."

Q: *Do you foresee a day when all veterans are once again allowed to use VA health-care services?*
A: Yes, I do. We can't do it overnight, because it would result in a massive increase in waiting times and a reduction in the quality of health care for veterans. But I am hoping that the unprecedented increases for VA hospitals in our last budget was the first step toward opening up our hospitals to more veterans. It's just flat unfair to say that a veteran in some parts of the country, making $30,000 a year, is too wealthy to receive VA health care. His neighbor might be making $150,000 a year because he didn't make the sacrifices of service that a veteran did. I am hopeful we can start phasing in higher-income thresholds.

Q: *What about mandatory funding?*
A: The ultimate goal is to adequately fund VA and to do it on a timely basis. Mandatory funding could be a plus or a minus. If mandatory VA health-care funding had been in place last year, the pay-as-you-go rules would have made it virtually impossible to provide an $11.8-billion increase in VA discretionary spending. The goal of mandatory funding – adequate funding and funding on time – is absolutely laudable, and I support that goal 100 percent. We could continue to have unprecedented increases in VA funding through the appropriations process. And if we could get that funding on time each year, then a case could be made that would be more beneficial to veterans. I am glad The American Legion has pushed the goal of mandatory funding, because that puts pressure on Congress to increase VA funding and do a better job of getting these bills passed on time.

– Jeff Stoffer

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THE ERA IN WHICH WE LIVE

"This is an unusual era in which we live, defined on September the 11th, 2001. See, that's a date that reminded us the world had changed significantly from what we thought the world was. We thought that oceans and friendly neighbors could protect us from attack. And, yet, on that day, less than 20 miles from this post, an airplane crashed into the Pentagon and killed 184 men, women and children. An airplane driven by fanatics and extremists and murderers crashed into the Pentagon. And as you know, on that day nearly 3,000 people died in New York. And more would have died had not the people on United Flight 93 showed incredible courage and saved no telling how many lives here in Washington, D.C., by taking that plane to the ground.

"My attitude about the world changed, and I know the attitude about the world from a lot of folks here in America changed. It reminded me that the most solemn duty of your federal government is to protect the American people from harm. The most solemn duty we have is to protect this homeland. I vowed that day that we would go on the offense against an enemy ... the best way to defeat this enemy is to find them overseas and bring them to justice so they will not hurt the folks here at home. In other words, we don't have the luxury of hoping for the best, of sitting back and being passive in the face of this threat. In the past, we would say oceans would protect us and, therefore, what happened overseas may not matter here at home. That's what changed on September the 11th. What happens overseas affects the security of the United States. And it's in this nation's interest that we go on the offense and stay on the offense. We want to defeat them there, so we don't have to face them here.

President George W. Bush, speaking at American Legion Post 177, Fairfax, Va., April 10, 2007

[AMERICANISM]

Tennessee teen elected Boys Nation president

A Tennessee high-school student was elected president and a New Jersey teen vice president of The American Legion's 62nd Boys Nation at Marymount University in Arlington, Va., in late July.



Joseph Riley of Etowah, Tenn., was elected president. The 18-year-old son of Craig and Becky Riley served as class president and student body president at McMinn Central High School, as well as Tennessee 4-H governor. He plans to study law and enter the JAG Corps.

"I've been interested in leadership and politics since I was about 6 or 7 years old," said Riley, who was sponsored by American Legion Post 248 in Etowah. "It feels pretty wonderful to be elected president of Boys Nation."

Dominick LoBraico of Shrewsbury, N.J., was elected Boys Nation vice president. He was sponsored by American Legion Post 168 in Red Bank.

American Legion National Commander Marty Conatser spoke to Boys Nation at Greenbelt American Legion Post 136 in Maryland on July 20. The next day, Conatser and the Legion's national chaplain, Elliott Foss, joined two Boys Nation senators in laying a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery's Tomb of the Unknowns.

The American Legion founded Boys Nation in 1946 to provide young men with a meaningful understanding of our nation's political process.

[MILITARY AFFAIRS]

Meet 'Crusher'

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency has unveiled "Crusher," an unmanned and – in the assessment of one report – "nearly unstoppable" vehicle, designed to prowl enemy-occupied cities and urban war zones.

According to a Fox News report, the 7-ton, six-wheeled ground-reconnaissance vehicle is equipped with GPS sensors and cameras that allow it to see enemy troops from 2.5 miles. It can travel 25 mph, be remotely operated, and withstand blasts that would destroy a Humvee – and kill or paralyze U.S. troops.

In a testament to American ingenuity and practicality, Crusher uses a diesel engine from a Volkswagen Jetta, parts of an Apple iPhone for internal diagnostics, and an Xbox 360 video-game controller for manipulating its cameras, raising its antenna and firing its weapons.

THE POWER OF A POST

Terrorist attacks could not keep Manhattan Legionnaires down.

SEAN POWERS had seen his share of tragedy. The former U.S. Army warrant officer served for 10 years in the New York Police Department. But the events of Sept. 11, 2001, went beyond anything he could ever have imagined. Powers lost several friends in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Among the victims were two police officers he considered close friends. He spent the weeks following 9/11, both on his police shift as a helicopter pilot and in his time off, helping rescue efforts in the smoldering cavity of lower Manhattan they called "the pit."

"When they changed it from 'rescue' to 'retrieval,' I was done with that," says Powers, who later retired from the department after four knee surgeries and now serves as commander of American Legion Post 1870 on board the USS *Intrepid*. For decades before 9/11, the famed Downtown Athletic Club – home to college football's Heisman Trophy – had given Post 1870 a place to meet in the heart of the financial district. The relationship between the post and the Downtown Athletic Club could be traced back to 1948. Many charter members of the Legion post were also DAC members.

The attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, so badly damaged the club that it was forced to close and eventually file for bankruptcy. Post 1870 began meeting in various restaurants – "very expensive restaurants," says Powers, who joined the post in 2002 and has served four years as commander.

In early 2005, Post 1870's current vice commander, Ralph Slane, came up with the idea to see if Legion meetings could be conducted on board New York's aircraft carrier-turned-museum, the USS *Intrepid*. Slane once served on the carrier. The idea led to an agreement with the USS *Intrepid* Association and the *Intrepid* Sea-Air-Space Museum.

"We have a very symbiotic relationship with the *Intrepid* folks," says Powers, 45, who was in the Army from 1982 to 1988. "There are former crewmembers of the *Intrepid* who are members of our post. It's a positive relationship for both sides."

With nearly 90 members, Post 1870 has long sponsored events and fundraisers for veterans and their families, including a Department of New York Legion College honorarium named for former post commander Tony Tucillo. The post also works with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52

[TROOP SUPPORT]

Clip a coupon, support a soldier

There are many ways to serve our country. Some do it with weapons, and as *The Washington Post* reports, some do it with scissors and coupons. Across the country, "a small army of old ladies determined to do their part in the war on terror" clips hundreds of coupons every day for deployed military personnel and their families to use at commissaries around the world, saving millions on much-needed food and household and personal items. Many of these "scissor warriors" meet at places such as American Legion Post 136 in Greenbelt, Md., where women of the Auxiliary gather every Tuesday to clip coupons. The American Legion Auxiliary's national headquarters estimates that up to $54 million in coupons is sent to deployed personnel and their families annually.

[ACTIVE DUTY]

Pick a card, stop a terrorist

Thanks to a joint DoD-Colorado State University project, some 50,000 decks of playing cards, with depictions of antiquities, artifacts and archeological sites, are helping U.S. forces prevent unnecessary damage to ancient sites and curb the illegal trade of stolen artifacts. Each suit has a specially tailored theme: diamonds for artifacts and treasures, spades for historical sites and archeological digs, hearts for winning hearts and minds, and clubs for heritage preservation.

The cards could help serve U.S. military and security interests, as well as Iraq's desire to recover treasure stolen in postwar looting. Marine Corps Reserve Col. Matthew Bogdanos, who helped recover many of the looted materials and wrote a book on the mission ("Thieves of Baghdad"), argues that insurgent groups use looted artifacts to finance their attacks. "They don't have opium in Iraq," he told The Associated Press, referring to how the insurgency is being funded in Afghanistan. "What they have is an almost limitless supply of antiquities."



REMEMBERING 9-11 FROM PAGE 51

local VA facilities to provide needed comfort and care items for veterans.

The post's biggest annual event is Fleet Week, when New York City hosts thousands of sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, honoring their service the week before Memorial Day. The celebration, which started in 1984, includes dozens of military demonstrations and displays, as well as public tours of participating ships. More than 4,000 servicemembers came to New York City during Fleet Week 2008.


Intrepid Museum

For 14 years, Post 1870 has hosted a Commanding Officers Reception at the conclusion of Fleet Week. The post organizes a dinner and celebratory night at The Water Club for senior and commanding officers. Earlier in the week, Past Post Commander James G. Kennedy hosts a barbecue for noncommissioned officers.

The Commanding Officers Reception is a major fundraiser for the post, bringing in $35,000 this year alone and more than $250,000 since it started.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 54

THE HISTORY OF THE *INTREPID*

The 900-foot-long *Essex*-class aircraft carrier *Intrepid* was commissioned by the U.S. Navy in 1943. Known as the "Fighting I" by the Navy and "the Ghost Ship" by the Japanese, the *Intrepid* survived one torpedo hit, five kamikaze strikes and seven bomb attacks during World War II.

On Oct. 29, 1944, *Intrepid* escaped serious damage from kamikaze attacks, thanks to a 20-man gun crew made up of black and Latino mess-cook volunteer gunners, 10 of whom lost their lives.

During the 1960s, *Intrepid* served as NASA's primary recovery ship for the *Mercury* and *Gemini* missions. She also served three combat tours during the Vietnam War.

Intrepid was decommissioned in 1974. Two years later, she was designated as the official U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Bicentennial Exposition Vessel, participating in the celebration of both the nation's and the U.S. Navy's 200th birthday. Destined for the scrap yard a year later, *Intrepid* was rescued by Zachary Fisher, who established the *Intrepid* Museum Foundation in 1978 for the sole purpose of "saving the *Intrepid* for generations to come."

On Aug. 4, 1982, the *Intrepid* Sea, Air & Space Museum opened to the public at New York City's Pier 86.

[HOMELESS VETERANS]

Operation Heartland lends a hand to homeless vets

Thanks to the awareness generated by a pair of Air Force veterans, a charity devoted to helping homeless veterans has raised more than $200,000 in gifts and goods to furnish a new facility for veterans moving from the streets to self-sufficiency.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.hvaf.org/operation_heartland.html

It all began when Scott and Katie Taylor contacted ABC affiliate WRTV-6 to nominate Helping Homeless Veterans and Families (HVAF) for the Indiana edition of "Oprah's Big Give." Just three weeks later, a seed grant of $5,000 had blossomed into a campaign known as "Operation Heartland" that raised about $110,000 in cash donations and more than $90,000 in contributions of furniture, linens, and other goods and services.

The funds and gifts are being used to furnish HVAF's Donald W. Moreau Sr. Veterans House, a 40-apartment facility in Indianapolis.

"All we wanted to do initially was shine a light on the good work of HVAF and the plight of homeless veterans," Katie explains.

The Taylors are both proud veterans, former F-15E pilots and Air Force Academy alums.

"They did a great job raising awareness of HVAF and of the needs of homeless veterans," says Charles Haenlein, HVAF president and CEO, who notes that HVAF's donor, volunteer and support bases have expanded since the campaign.

"Helping HVAF allowed the best of Indiana to come together," Katie says. That included firms such as FedEx and organizations like the Indianapolis Colts, Indiana Pacers, American Legion Post 155 in Carmel and others.

Katie's brother, who flies F-16s in Iraq, is sending U.S. Flags back home for groups that donated to Operation Heartland.

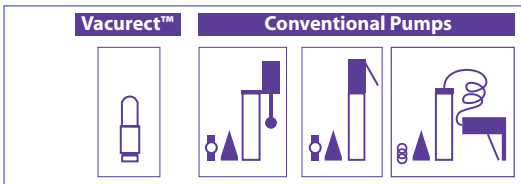
The new apartment building is named after a longtime veterans advocate and is the work of many helping hands, including VA, United Way, Indianapolis Housing Trust Fund and Operation Heartland.

– Alan W. Dowd

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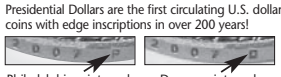
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REMEMBERING 9-11 FROM PAGE 52

The money goes toward VA medical facilities, scholarships, the purchase of wheelchairs for disabled veterans, and the *Intrepid* Fallen Heroes Fund, which has provided nearly $60 million in support for the families of U.S. military personnel killed on active duty, and for severely wounded military personnel and veterans.

The reception requires a team effort. Kennedy is chairman of James G. Kennedy Co., a New York-based construction company; Past Post 1870 Commander Roger Norton is the company's CEO. Both make financial contributions to the event, along with Past Post 1870 Commander Richie Bisso, who owns a plumbing company.

Bottom line: an act of terrorism could not keep this New York City post from coming back to life and resuming its place in the community. Powers admits there was some talk of shutting down the post after 9/11, but its members persevered.

"I think what we have here is a post that is so tight-knit," he says. "These guys are more service-oriented than looking for a social membership. We don't have a post facility. We don't have a hall. We just have guys looking for some way to help."

– *Steve Brooks*

THE UNFORGETTABLE FLIGHT

California Legionnaire leads effort, locally and nationally, to honor the heroism of Flight 93.

IT WASN'T UNTIL HIJACKERS commandeered United Airlines Flight 93 on Sept. 11, 2001, that passengers learned through frantic phone calls to family and friends on the ground that terrorists had flown planes into the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In an effort to reclaim control of their plane, passengers and crew launched an attack against their captors. Their counter-assault sent the aircraft plummeting into a reclaimed strip mine near rural Shanksville, Pa., killing everyone on board.

FIND OUT MORE

Union City Flight 93 Memorial
www.93memorial.com

National Memorial in Shanksville, Pa.
www.honorflight93.org

The bravery demonstrated by the passengers and crew of Flight 93 sent a ripple of patriotic pride across the United States. Michael L. Emerson, a member of American Legion Post 649 in Castro Valley, Calif., was so struck by their act of courage and sacrifice that he wanted

The American Legion's national insurance programs to change

Periodically, The American Legion reviews its insurance programs to ensure that Legionnaires are offered the best possible coverage at competitive rates. Accordingly, The American Legion recently sought competitive bids for the brokerage and administrative service for insurance plans offered by the national American Legion. After a comprehensive review of all bids, Gallagher Benefit Services was selected as the new broker effective June 1, 2008.

As the transition process began, a number of problems arose with the former broker and administrator. As part of the transition to the new broker, The American Legion must ensure that it has an accurate record of all insureds.

If you are insured under any of the following national insurance programs, you can help assist with the transition:

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FAX: (317) 860-3001
(Attn: Member Benefits/Insurance)

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to do something to keep their memory alive.

"I was concerned that the heroics aboard Flight 93 might become a footnote to the tragedies in New York and Washington," Emerson says. "Had it not been for passengers and crew, the White House or Capitol could have been destroyed. As a result of their act of rebellion against their hijackers, those aboard Flight 93 should forever be remembered as heroes."


Flight 93 Memorial

Emerson prepared and presented a hand-drawn sketch depicting his vision for a befitting memorial thousands of miles away from the crash site, in Union City, Calif. City officials liked the idea but suggested Emerson consult Robert Mowat, a local landscape architect, to help him refine the drawings. With support from the families of those who perished on Flight 93, Emerson resubmitted his plans, and the city approved the project.

With the site chosen – Sugar Mill Landing Park – he led a campaign that netted more than $35,000 in donations, including $1,000 from his Legion post. Companies from four states contributed memorial and storyboard stones, transportation, labor and services, along with benches, concrete, trees, landscaping and a flagpole.

More than $2.5 million ultimately went into the memorial, which was dedicated in December. Emerson presented a $28,000 check to Union City officials for future maintenance.

Recognizing his efforts and accomplishments, the National Parks Service, at the urging of many Flight 93 families, appointed Emerson to serve on a steering committee to oversee a national memorial to Flight 93 at Shanksville, Pa.

"Every life is precious," he says. "Every hero aboard Flight 93 had the potential to do great things. I am overwhelmed at how many people across the country want to play a part, and to help us honor the heroes of Flight 93 in such a way that they might never be forgotten."

– James V. Carroll

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[PERSONAL COMPUTING]

More to cut and paste than you think

BY REID GOLDSBOROUGH

If you've been around computers for any period of time, you may think the cut-and-paste operation is child's play. But there's more to it than meets the eye, and a history behind it that's fascinating.

Cut and paste, and the related copy and paste, have been an essential part of computer-aided writing from the time that dedicated word processors and then word-processing software on personal computers began replacing electric typewriters in the 1970s and 1980s. Being able to move or copy selections of text made both writing and editing text a great deal quicker and more efficient.

The term "cut and paste" actually precedes the digital age. It originally referred to the manuscript-editing practice of physically cutting a paragraph or paragraphs with a long scissors from a page and physically pasting them to a different location.

With personal-computing software, cut and paste didn't become standardized until the advent of graphical user interfaces, led by the Apple Macintosh, introduced in 1984. Apple, as with much else, copied the cut-and-paste operations developed at Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center.

The Mac exposed many people to the now-familiar keyboard shortcuts of holding down a modifier key and pressing X for cutting the highlighted text (removing it), C for copying it (keeping the original text in place), V for pasting it, and Z for undoing what you did. These four keys are all located next to one another at the left end of the bottom row of standard "QWERTY" keyboards. Whereas the Mac today uses Command as the modifier key, Microsoft Windows uses Control.

These keyboard shortcuts are a faster way of performing these operations than pulling down the Edit menu and selecting the respective procedure.

An even faster way of cutting and pasting with Windows that many people don't know about: continuing to use the mouse after selecting the text by pressing the right mouse button. The first three options presented in the pop-up menu that will appear on the screen are Cut, Copy, and Paste. A still faster way to move text is by simply dragging selected text to its new location using your mouse; pressing the Control key while dragging copies it.

Shortcuts for selecting text include double-clicking on a word, triple-clicking on a paragraph, and placing the cursor at the spot where you want to begin the selection, clicking inside the scroll bar to the right to reach the spot where you want to end the selection, and pressing the Shift key as you click on that spot.

Today's standardized world of graphical user interfaces makes it possible to copy text not only from within a single document but also from one document to another even if the documents were created by completely different programs. Within Windows, holding down the Alt key and hitting Tab is a quick way to switch among open programs.

Typically when you copy and paste text between programs, the text retains the formatting of the source document instead of matching the formatting of the destination document. If you want to prevent this from happening using Microsoft Word (other word processors have similar procedures), you can pull down the Paste Special command from the Edit menu and select Unformatted Text. Or you can first paste the text to Notepad and then copy and paste it to your destination document. Both procedures also eliminate any graphics you may have copied.

One common use for copying text this way is saving to your own hard drive text you see on a Web page (you can't cut text from the Web). Depending on your purpose, saving text in this manner can be both simpler and more direct than saving entire Web pages, bookmarking pages within your Web browser, or using a specialized Web archiving program.

Be careful, however, about reusing any text verbatim that you copy from the Web. Many people erroneously believe that if they find something on the free public Internet, it's also free for taking and using. National and international copyright law as well as plagiarism rules in business and academic settings require certain actions.

In a nutshell, if you reuse someone else's words, you should rephrase them into your own words unless you're quoting that person. If you reuse someone else's idea, you should give that person credit if the idea is original. General Web search tools such as Google or specialized anti-plagiarism programs can easily uncover copyright and plagiarism violations.

Reid Goldsborough is a syndicated columnist and author of the book "Straight Talk About the Information Superhighway." ***reidgold@comcast.net, www.reidgoldsborough.com***

[CAREERS]

How to write winning thank-you letters

After the interview is no time to stop selling your qualifications. In fact, it is precisely the right time, and the thank-you letter is just the right tool. However, assuming that most people will also be sending thank-you letters, you must know how to stand out from the crowd. Consider these strategies for writing your thank-you letters:



■ If the company shared some of its challenges, relate how your experience ties directly to its needs. Example: The company is not responsive "in the field," to employees or customers. Write about how you improved field-support operations, better distributed resources, realigned personnel and improved overall performance.

■ If during the interview the company shared a problem it is currently working to resolve, highlight how you solved that same (or a similar) problem before. Example: The company is in the midst of a major technology upgrade that is both over-budget and over-schedule. Write about how you've overcome that same challenge, eliminated roadblocks, and delivered a stalled project on time and within budget.

■ If the company communicated an objection about offering you the position, describe why you are the "right" candidate. Example: The company is concerned that all your work experience has been in the military. Clearly communicate – in English and not military jargon – the skills you have that are readily transferable, the achievements you've made and how they relate specifically to that company, and the overall strength of your "general" professional skills (e.g., planning, organization, resource management).

■ Suppose there was something important that you forgot to mention during the interview. The thank-you letter is precisely the tool to communicate those achievements, experiences and qualifications. Give the hiring committee the "ammo" it needs to make the right hiring decision – you.

Be creative, be detailed and be responsive to the company's needs, and watch how well thank-you letters can work for you.

Wendy Enelow is the co-author of "Expert Résumés for Military-to-Civilian Transitions" and "Executive Résumé Toolkit."

www.wendyenelow.com

[EDUCATION]

Home sweet homeschooling

A recent study published by the Fraser Institute reveals fascinating facts about the historic roots and growing influence of homeschooling.

As recently as 1980, homeschooling was illegal in 30 states. Not until 1993 was it legal in all 50 states. But it has exploded in the past 20 years, educating just 50,000 U.S. kids in 1985, 300,000 by 1992, 850,000 by 1999, and "perhaps as high as 2.1 million" by the mid-2000s.

The study, "Homeschooling: From the Extreme to the Mainstream," notes that presidents George Washington, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt were all homeschooled, as were John Jay, Thomas Edison, Robert E. Lee, Booker T. Washington, Mark Twain and Andrew Carnegie.

www.fraserinstitute.org

[VERBATIM]

"People go ape when they see it."

Jim Alexander of Superflag, which produces gigantic U.S. Flags for display at sporting events

"I grew up in a family that didn't know what glass ceilings were."

Lt. Gen. Ann Dunwoody, on her recent nomination to become the first female four-star general in U.S. history

"I'm sure they are watching. I'm glad they finally have a chance to see you, Mr. Addington, given your penchant for being unobtrusive."

Rep. William Delahunt, D-Mass., to David Addington, chief of staff to Vice President Dick Cheney, after Addington refused to answer questions during a Judiciary Committee hearing, saying al-Qaeda might be watching on C-SPAN

"Why don't we do away with the court system and go back to the Old West? You have a gun and I have a gun, and we'll settle in the streets."

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, ridiculing the U.S. Supreme Court ruling against the Washington, D.C., ban on handguns

"The temptation is to kinda say, 'Maybe this isn't really a war. Maybe this is just a bunch of disgruntled folks that occasionally come and hurt us.' That's not the way I feel about it."

President George W. Bush

"If we went into a Muslim country and left a Bible, we would be in prison and then decapitated a few years later."

Sue Ann Pieri of Houston, complaining about finding a Quran on her doorstep in June. The Book of Signs Foundation claims to have distributed 30,000 in an effort to educate non-Muslims about the religion.

"It's gone completely crazy. Our computers and calculators can't deal with all the zeros, even on the cheapest products."

Economic analyst David Moyo, on spiking consumer prices in Zimbabwe. Independent estimates put the country's inflation rate near 4 million percent.

"I'm a victim of sexism myself all the time."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, on whether Sen. Hillary Clinton's gender was a factor in her presidential campaign loss

"No, I do not."

Singer Rene Marie, when asked if she would apologize for singing "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" – often called the "black national anthem" – instead of "The Star-Spangled Banner" before Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper's State of the City address

"I didn't even know what to do. I just started freaking out – screaming, yelling."

Kyle Stansell, the son of one of three Americans rescued July 2 after five years of captivity in Colombia. Marc Gonsalves, Thomas Howes and Keith Stansell were U.S. government contractors held hostage by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, after their plane crashed in a remote area of the country in February 2003.

"Too bad that all the people who know how to run the country are busy driving taxicabs and cutting hair."

George Burns



[LIVING WELL]

PERSONALIZED MEDICINE

BY DR. JOEL KUPERSMITH

It seems nearly every day brings more news about the potential role of genes in medicine. Consider these recent headlines, all of which appeared within a week or so of each other: "Two types of cancer tied to gene." "Gene linked to adult-onset obesity." "Gene mutation boosts leukemia drug's effect." "Gene test shows if cancer drugs will cure you." "New gene for Alzheimer's discovered."

The list goes on. But what does this mean for patients? Are these discoveries being translated into better health care? Are we at the point where doctors can tailor treatment to individual patients, based on their personal DNA?

The era of so-called genomic – or personalized – medicine is arriving slowly but surely. While it may take several years for the above-mentioned discoveries to move from the lab to the clinic, some past genetic research advances are already part of routine care.

Doctors in VA, for example, use a genetic test to confirm the diagnosis of hemochromatosis, a hereditary condition in which iron builds up in the body. Other genetic tests are used to help diagnose Alzheimer's disease or various cancers. VA researchers are probing the benefits of a genetic

[HEALTH CARE]

Americans like their health care – but not the country's

Despite what many pundits and policymakers claim, Americans are generally satisfied with their health care. *The American* provided a snapshot in a recent feature on the state of U.S. health care:

83 PERCENT say the quality of the health care they receive is excellent or good

81 PERCENT say their physical health is excellent or good

78 PERCENT report having a routine checkup in the past year

77 PERCENT say they are satisfied with their health care

70 PERCENT call their coverage excellent or good

Yet when asked about the country's health care, the picture changes:

88 PERCENT say the health-care system needs fundamental changes or needs to be rebuilt entirely

56 PERCENT say the health-care system has major problems

[MILITARY AFFAIRS]

Ground breaks at Bethesda for new Walter Reed

DoD officials and President George W. Bush broke ground July 3 on a new 345-bed Walter Reed National Military Medical Center at Bethesda, Md. The project, estimated to cost nearly $1 billion, will unite Walter Reed Army hospital in Washington with the National Naval Medical Center in a 261,000-square-foot expansion that includes two new buildings.

The American Legion opposes the closing of the Walter Reed hospital, calling for renovations to the Washington site instead. Supporters of the merger argue that growth is restricted at the historic campus in Washington.

test to personalize drug therapy for depression. They are studying whether the test reduces the risk of side effects, boosts medication adherence, and improves treatment outcomes for patients.

Another sign of personalized medicine growth is the increasing Internet presence of companies that allow consumers to send in a saliva sample, then receive a personal DNA analysis showing their risk for various health conditions. Keep in mind that these services are still fairly expensive, and there are questions about whether the information provided is truly beneficial for consumers. For example, just because a person has a gene linked to a particular disease, it doesn't mean he or she will develop the condition. Many factors activate and deactivate genes, and scientists are just beginning to unravel this complex puzzle.

Genomic Medicine and Chronic Diseases. Even with notable progress in some aspects of personalized medicine, there is still a long way to go before it is practiced widely. A study published earlier this year in the *Journal of the American Medical Association,* by researchers from VA and the RAND Corp., offered a reality check. The authors analyzed 68 existing studies and found that, by and large, health-care providers in the United States and other developed countries are still unprepared to use genomics to help patients with common chronic illnesses, such as diabetes or heart disease. More education and training is needed, and systems need to be created to safely and efficiently handle genetic information.

VA has launched an ambitious research agenda to address many of these issues. For example, we are looking at how best to incorporate genetic information into our state-of-the-art electronic medical records.

VA researchers are also examining the many ethical issues involved in genetic testing. For example, how are DNA samples stored? Who will have access to the information? DNA collected through research studies is handled according to strict and clearly defined rules. But more guidance will be needed as genetic testing becomes a bigger part of routine medical care.

VA's Genomic Medicine Program Advisory Committee, which includes genetics experts and representatives from veterans groups, is helping to shape VA's policies and procedures in this area. Guidance is also coming from a Web-based survey of some 900 veterans, conducted for VA by the Genetics and Public Policy Center at Johns Hopkins University. The survey is based on results from earlier focus groups with veterans.

VA's foremost concern is to protect veterans and handle their genetic information in a way that is safe and advantageous for them. This cautious approach will ensure that veterans reap the full benefits of the era of personalized medicine.

Joel Kupersmith, M.D., is chief research and development officer for the Veterans Health Administration.

This article is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.



[TECHNOLOGY]

Wounded soldier, airman given Segways

Two wounded veterans from Indiana who were seriously injured in Iraq now have Segways to improve their mobility.

Army Sgt. Sean Lewis of Indianapolis lost his right leg and injured his left leg when he was struck by mortar fire. Air Force Tech Sgt. Adam Popp of Clarksville lost his right leg and suffered extensive injuries to the right side of his body, arm and face when a mine detonated while he was attempting to remove it.

The Segways are gifts from Segs4Vets, a program run by Disability Rights Advocates for Technology, a charity.

Jerry Kerr, a founder of Segs4Vets and a Segway user who became a quadriplegic after a diving accident, said, "The Segway gives these military servicemembers more independence, keeps them standing on their new prosthetic legs and out of wheelchairs. We are grateful for their sacrifice, and this is our way of saying, 'Thank you.'"

In two years, Segs4vets has given 148 Segways to Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, most of whom are amputees, and to military rehabilitation centers in Washington, D.C., Texas and California.

How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to ***The American Legion Magazine,* Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206,** fax **(317) 630-1280,** e-mail **reunions@legion.org** or submit information via our Web site, **www.legion.org/veterans/reunions.**

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. **Due to the large number of reunions, *The American Legion Magazine* will publish a group's listing only once a year.** Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. **We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim.** Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to ***The American Legion Magazine,* Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206,** fax **(317) 630-1280** or e-mail **reunions@legion.org.**

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life memberships by their posts. **This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership.** Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to ***The American Legion Magazine,* Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.**

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to ***The American Legion Magazine,* Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.** Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

AIR FORCE/ARMY AIR FORCES

3rd Strat Support Sqdn – SAC, Fairborn, OH, 10/2-4, Gene VanHouten, (618) 544-5256, genevanhouten@hotmail.com; **5th AF 20th Cbt Mapping Sqdn (South Pacific),** Bayville, NY, 10/11, Joseph Megna, (516) 628-3335, colavito4@optonline.net; **6th Bomb Grp 313th Wing,** Midland, TX, 10/23-26, Bob Reagan, (616) 897-7515, smilerer@worldnet.att.net; **13th AF (All Units),** St. Louis, 9/17-20, Phil Dyer, (231) 843-9597; **28th Wing Assn,** Rapid City, SD, 9/4-8, Lloyd Peterson, (605) 393-8545, alpeterson@rap.midco.net; **36th TFW/525th TFS,** St. Charles, MO, 9/26-28, Dean Yarikunek, dyarolim@mail.win.org; **309th Ftr Sqdn (WWII),** Chattanooga, TN, 9/3-7, Dalton Smith, (201) 244-5854;

376th Bomb Grp 15th AF (WWII), Herndon, VA, 9/3-7, James Wiley, (803) 819-1612; **377th Sec Police Sqdn (Tan Son Nhut AB, Vietnam),** Tampa, FL, 2/5-8, 2009, Jim Stewart, (810) 639-5755, jstewart@centurytel.net; **459th Bomb Grp Assn (WWII),** Atlanta, 9/25-28, Susan Rawlston, (770) 934-5067, slrga@aol.com; **781st Bomb Sqdn 465th Bomb GP Air Force (WWII),** Dayton, OH, 10/5-8, Roland Soucy, (937) 426-6314, gsoucy@woh.rr.com; **Air Tech Liaison Officers,** San Antonio, 10/23-27, Robert A.E. Callanan, (972) 816-4746, bob@callanans.org; **Marksmanship, SAMTU/CATM Instructors, Shooters, Gunsmiths, Cmdrs & Support,** San Antonio, 10/10-13, Rich Arwood, 50reupoc@catm.com; **Vietnam Sec Police Assn,** Albuquerque, NM, 10/15-18, Steve Gattis, (254) 898-2647, sgattis-lm49@vspa.com

ARMY

3rd Cav Vets Assn, Elk Grove Village, IL, 9/25-27, Gene Andrews, (773) 779-7786; **5th Spec Forces Grp Abn,** Fort Campbell, KY, 9/17-19, Steven Mellar, (270) 956-2811, steven.mellar@us.army.mil; **17th Sig Bn Assn,** Killeen, TX, 9/18-21, Arlo Janssen, (703) 819-0136, adjanssen@aol.com; **27th FA Rgt Assn (All Units),** New York, 9/5-7, James Suessmann, (973) 742-3474, jrs.cpa@verizon.net; **28th Gen Hosp (Croix Chapeau, France),** Lafayette, LA, 10/15-18, Floyd J. Friloux Sr., (985) 764-6030, ffriloux@cox.net; **30th FA Bn,** Louisville KY, 9/5-7, Jim Knapp, (502) 412-3554, jknapp@insightbb.com; **33rd Inf Rgt Cbt Team (Panama),** Gettysburg, PA, 10/1-5, Frank Ryan, (516) 541-3891, dolphindriver98@yahoo.com; **70th Inf Div Assn Trailblazers,** Erlanger, KY, 9/9-14, Andy McMahon, (803) 754-9362, macson70@aol.com; **162nd Ord Det, APO US Forces 09034,** Gatlinburg, TN, 10/21-23, Larry P. Larousse, (985) 652-6803, lplarousse@louisianakc.org;

164th Inf Assn, Valley City, ND, 9/12-14, Patricia Drong, (701) 646-6561, pjdrong@ictc.com; **314th Inf Assn 79th Recon Trp (WWII),** Gatlinburg, TN, 9/25-28, Joe Campbell, (386) 245-8304, joewcee@aol.com; **520th MP Co, SHAPE (Paris, France & Mons, Belgium) (All Years),** Gettysburg, PA, 9/17-21, David Brubaker, (570) 265-9647, davidw069@yahoo.com; **546th AAA Bn (WWII),** Lemars, IA, 9/26-27, Ken Lubben, (712) 546-5540; **560th MP Co,** Fort Leonard Wood, MO, 10/17-19, Ralph Hildebrand, (208) 870-4611, boiseman37@yahoo.com; **765th Trans Railroad Serv Bn (Korea, 1951-1954),** Salt Lake City, 9/17-20, Billy F. Hill, (423) 942-2644; **H Trp 17th Cav Americal Div 198th Bde (Chu Lai, Vietnam),** Warrensville, OH, 10/10-13, Carmen Matteo, (440) 838-0463, carmen.mateo@sbcglobal.net; **Postal Class 103 APO 3, 7, 9, 45, 500 & 503 (Korea & Japan, 1955-1958),** Pigeon Forge, TN, 9/21-25, John J. Schwepe, (419) 422-7269, bejaydl@bright.net

COAST GUARD

Lightship Sailors Assn, Hyannis, MA, 10/16-19, Jay McCarthy, (561) 495-1761, jfment@bellsouth.net; **Loran Stn (Angaur, Palau),** Alameda, CA, 11/13-16, T.J. Mackell, (925) 820-4595, tj_m@prodigy.net

JOINT

Cbt Heli Pilots Assn, Nashville, TN, 10/24-26, Rhea Rippey, (615) 356-7115, rhearippey@comcast.net

MARINES

Echo 2nd Bn 5th Mar, San Antonio, 11/7-10, John Porras, (310) 995-5928, johnmp25@wmconnect.com

NAVY

***Burleson* APA 67 (WWII),** Branson, MO, 9/17-20, Billy D. Smith, (816) 524-3775; ***Canapus* AS-34,** Jacksonville, FL, 9/11-13, Jeanne Marie Everson, (727) 388-7118, as-34@hullnumber.com; ***Chivo* SS-341 (1961-65),** Mount Pleasant, SC, 10/2-5, Bart Lockwood, (941) 379-4470, glockwood2@comcast.net; ***Cobbler* SS-344,** Groton, CT, 9/23-25, Jimmy Mowry, ss-344@hullnumber.com; ***Coghlan* DD 606,** Las Vegas, 9/30-10/2, Pat Arone, (610) 574-3449, pat@aroneassociates.com; ***Custer* APA 40 (WWII),** Nashville, TN, 10/2-5, Dick Shaw, (407) 862-2903, jshaw1114@aol.com; ***Dixie* AD 14,** San Diego, 9/20-24, J.T. Smith, (615) 513-2440, ad-14@hullnumber.com;

***Douglas A. Munro* DE 422,** Nashville, TN, 9/11-12, J. W. Elder, (336) 674-7385, de-422@hullnumber.com; ***Farragut* Nav Tng Stn,** Athol, ID, 9/6, Janice Lauer, (208) 660-0660; ***Grand Canyon* AD/ AR 28,** Indianapolis, 9/16-20, Robert Dunn, (317) 881-8866, robert.dunn@att.net; **Higgins Boat LCVP/LCM,** Fort Pierce, FL, 10/31-11/31, Ed Brisbois, (508) 943-5173; ***Hinsdale* APA 120,** Branson, MO, 9/9-11, Lane Kunath, (712) 580-3323, klk7@smunet.net; ***Mobile* CL 63,** Branson, MO, 9/11-14, Don Ellis, (573) 348-1842, curtis@eeetourstobranson.com; ***Norris* DD/DDE 859,** Gulfport, LA, 10/12-15, Ed Mehl, (302) 541-0685, e.mehl@mchsi.com; ***Oklahoma City* CL 91/CLG 5/CG 5/SSN 723,** Cruise, Miami, FL, 11/9-14, Brian Forrester, (800) 998-1228, brian@cruiseholidaysaz.com; ***Randy* DE 764,** Fort Mitchell, KY, 9/7-11, Tom Lucas, (800) 603-3332; ***Sangamon* CVE 26,** Covington, KY, 9/19-26, Don Schroeder, (920) 682-2013, gerrtanddon-s@sbcglobal.net; ***Theadfin* SS 140,** Fort Worth, TX, 9/4-7, Bart Lockwood, (974) 379-4470, glockwood@comcast.net; **VP-47,** Reno, NV, 9/10-14, Maurice Sherman, (775) 624-0982, seavp47run@sbcglobal.net; ***West Virginia* BB 48,** Colorado Springs, CO, 9/4-7, Joe Variot, (231) 584-2280, bb-48@hullnumber.com

COMRADES IN DISTRESS

1st Bn 36th FA (Augsbury & Reese, Germany, April 1974-Jan 1976). Robert Canady seeks witnesses to verify a PTSD claim. CID 1497

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IN SEARCH OF

3rd Inf Div A Co 30th Inf, G Co 15th Inf (Korea 1951-1952) & A Co 7th Inf (Fort Benning, GA, 1954-1956), Henry Burke, (803) 782-7517, pennieburke@sc.rr.com

7th Div Football Team (Korea, 1961), James Copeland, (928) 726-1007

8th & I Mar (1958-1961), John Reim, (856) 364-4626, jreim@aol.com

16th Eng Bn E Co 1st Armd Div (Fort Hood, TX, 1962-1963), Edward Strawn, (281) 633-0033, emstrawn@comcast.net

16th Sig Bn Bravo Co (Fort Huachuca, AZ, 1960-1962 & Butzbach, Germany 1962-1965), H. Deering, (817) 454-2421, aromega@aol.com

31st Cbt Eng Bn "Blackhorse Bearcat" (Phan Thiet & Phouc Vinh, Vietnam, 1968-1969), John Frye, (941) 748-4106, jfrye13@tampabay.rr.com

57th Field Hosp (Toul, France, 1952-1953), Alfred Roberts, (631) 749-2050, henrie0419@aol.com

77th Trans Co (La Rochell, France, 1961-1963), Charles Thacher, (260) 351-2503

105th Seabees (Guiuan Samar, Philippines, Dec 1944), J. Hamel, dorjo2@verizon.net

121st Sig Bn C Co 1st Inf Div (Dian Base Camp, Vietnam, 1969-1970), Mark Peterson, (609) 877-3692

445th Ftr Sqdn (Bakersfield, CA, 1945-1946), Thomas A. Sykes, tasykes@toast.net

501st Finance Co 1st AD (Furth, Germany), Jeanette Pohl, (772) 359-2901, pkiepert@bellsouth.net

514th Car Co (London, 1944-1945), Harold C. Goettner, (410) 239-3730, yancy97@aol.com

635th Sec Police Sqdn (Utapio AB, Thailand, 1973-1974), Robert Earl Jones, (321) 212-8761, sonofthunderfl@yahoo.com

AACS, AFCS & AFCC, R. Sauer, (865) 482-3013, rsauer@comcast.net

Beachmasters WESTPAC Det 3rd Mar Div (Driftwood Beach, Phillipines, 1958), Francis Faulkner, (918) 435-4270

C Co 128th Armd Ord Maint Bn Reserve Cmd 6th Armd Div (Fort Leonard Wood, MO, July 1955), Ken E. Patterson, (636) 587-9955, kenelu@charter.net

C Co 110th Inf Rgt 28th Div (Ulm, Germany, 1951-1953), Leland Wenig, (920) 361-3071, jeanleewen@centurytel.net

Explosive Ord Disposal (EOD) Assn (All Personnel) and Bomb & Mine Disposal (WWII), Bernard Diggs, (757) 481-2962, bdiggs3@cox.net

HHC 4th Bn 35th Armor 4th Armd Div (Illishim, Germany, 1966-1970, James Willis, (307) 568-2890, csmwillis@yaoo.com

Hosp Corps School Class 121 Class A School (Portsmouth, VA, 1952), John Gergle, (717) 838-4993

LCT 1072 (Pacific, 1944-1946), Paul Gattinella, (401) 274-4341

Med Sect Dispensary HQ & HQ Co 7th Inf Div (Camp Casey, Korea, 1961-1962), Autrey Doyle Jones, (601) 546-2140, ofm@netdoor.com

Mil Assistance Advisory Grp (MAAG) (Saigon, Vietnam, 1956), Frank Kowalski, (619) 460-1248, ftkmk@cox.net

Nav Base Peleliu (GROPAC 9) (1944-1946), David Anderson, (217) 344-8533, d_andrson@comcast.net

Navy Acorn 33 Corpsmen (Port Huenene, CA & Guam, 1944-1945), Louis Haefling, (847) 931-7417, papalouh@aol.com

TAPS

James J. Castrichini, Dept. of California. Nat'l Legis. Council Memb. 1981-1986 and 1989-1990, Nat'l Counter-Subversive Activ. Cmte. Memb. 1982-1984, Nat'l Distinguished Guests Vice Chmn. 1992-1994 and Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1994-2006.

John S. Fink, Dept. of Missouri. Nat'l & Homeland Sec Vice Chmn. 2004-2008.

Donald V. Gray, Dept. of Minnesota. Nat'l Rehab. Cmsn. Advisory Board Memb. 1971-1975, Dept. Cmdr. 1975-1976 and Nat'l Internal Affairs Cmsn. Consultant 1977-1995.

Robert "Bob" A. Matiasek, Dept. Florida. Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Memb. 1966-1968 and 1969-1974, Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Memb. 1968-1969, Dept. Cmdr. 1972-1973, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1974-1979, Nat'l Counter-Subversive Activ. Cmte. Memb. 1980-1982, Nat'l Legis. Cncl. Memb. 1983-1986 and Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Vice Chmn. 1983-1985 and 1990-1992.

William S. "Bill" Todd, Dept. of Tennessee. Nat'l Law & Order Cmte. Memb. 1951-1952, Nat'l Law & Order Cmte. Chmn. 1952-1953, Nat'l Mbrshp. & Post Activ. Cmte. Memb. 1953-1960 and 1961-1964, Nat'l Military Affairs Cmte. Chmn. 1953-1954, Nat'l Naval Affairs Cmte. Vice Chmn. 1955-1956 and 1957-1962, Dept. Cmdr. 1956-1957, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Alt. 1960-1962, Nat'l Counter-Subversive Activ. Cmte. Memb. 1961-1962, Nat'l Sec. Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1962-1964, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb. 1962-1964, Nat'l Advisory Cmte. to the Nat'l Cmdr. 1962-1963, Nat'l Homeland Sec & Civil Preparedness Chmn. 1964, Nat'l American Legion Insurance Cmte. Chmn. 1964-1969, Nat'l American Legion Insurance Cmte. Memb. 1964-2005 and Nat'l Legis. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1975-1980.

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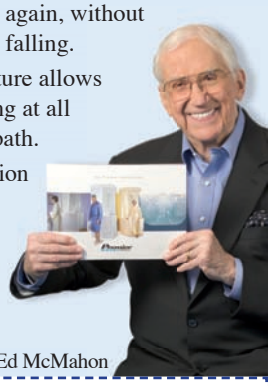
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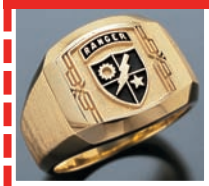


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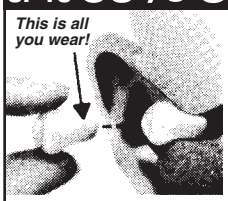
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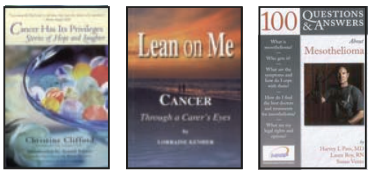
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BALL CAPS

A computer does save time at work. I can play solitaire without having to spend all that time shuffling real cards.

TWO MEN got out of their cars after they collided at an intersection. One took a bottle from his pocket and said to the other, "Here, maybe you'd like a nip to calm your nerves."

"Thanks," the second man said, and took a long drink from the container. "Here, you have one, too," he added, handing back the whiskey.

"Well, I'd rather not," the first man said. "At least not until after the police have been here."

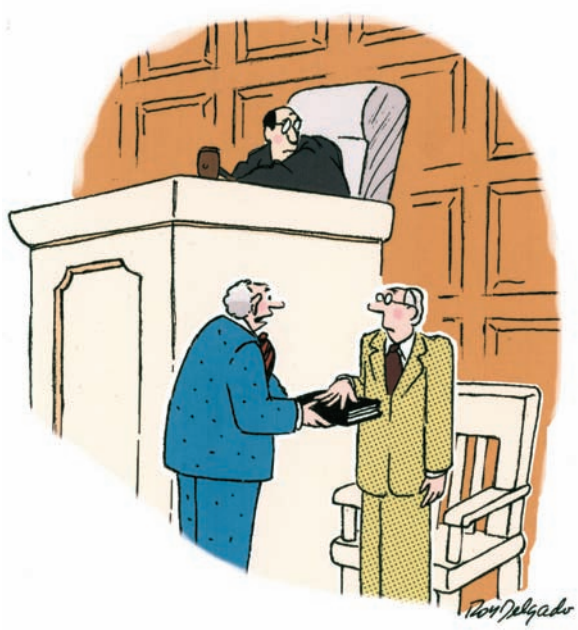
TOLD TO TREAT his military housing as he would if he owned it, the Navy chief quickly mounted a sign in the front yard: "For Sale."

KITCHEN SIGNS

- I came, I saw, I decided to order take-out.
- Countless people have eaten in this kitchen and gone on to lead normal lives.
- Thou shalt not weigh more than thy refrigerator.
- I'd cook dinner, but I can't find the can opener.
- My next house will have only vending machines.

THE JUDGE said to the defendant, "I thought I told you I never wanted to see you in here again."

"Your honor," the defendant said, "that's what I tried to tell the police, but they just wouldn't listen."



"Promise to tell the truth, including the parts you'd prefer to keep for an upcoming book or movie deal?"



"I asked for ballpark figures, Wilkerson. These are golf scores."



"Business is slow. Do your stuff."

AN OLD WOMAN called a furnace repairman, who put oil in the motor and charged her $80 for labor. "But it only took you five minutes!" she exclaimed.

The repairman explained that his company had a minimum one-hour charge on every house call.

"Well, I want my remaining 55 minutes of labor," the lady replied, handing him a rake.

"THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY announced this week that Barack Obama will give his acceptance speech at an 80,000-seat stadium, and that they will not serve fried food at the Democratic convention. Those are the two things they announced. Yeah, which begs the question: where are they gonna find 80,000 Americans who don't eat fried food? It's not gonna happen." – *Conan O'Brien*



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